

B1



(19)

Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets



(11)

EP 0 240 226 B1

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT SPECIFICATION

(45) Date of publication and mention
of the grant of the patent:
06.11.1996 Bulletin 1996/45

(51) Int Cl.⁶: **G02F 1/17, B60R 1/08,**
G02F 1/133, C09K 9/02,
C07D 498/04, C07D 513/04
// (C07D498/04, 265:00,
241:00),
(C07D513/04, 279:00, 241:00)

(21) Application number: **87302530.8**(22) Date of filing: **24.03.1987**

(54) **Single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices, solutions for use therein, and uses thereof**

Selbstlöschende, elektrochrome Ein-Kammer-Lösung-Phase-Vorrichtungen, ihre Lösungen und ihre Anwendungen

Dispositifs électrochromiques auto-effaçables à compartiment unique à "solution-phase", ses solutions et ses applications

(84) Designated Contracting States:
DE FR GB

(56) References cited:
EP-A- 0 012 419 EP-A- 0 145 337
US-A- 3 453 038 US-A- 3 692 388
US-A- 3 774 988 US-A- 3 912 368

(30) Priority: **31.03.1986 US 846354**

- **PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN**, vol. 7, no. 64 (P-183)(1209), March 17, 1983; & JP-A-57 208 530
- **CONFERENCE RECORD OF 1978 BIENNIAL DISPLAY RESEARCH CONFERENCE**, Cherry Hill, N.J, US, October 24-26, 1978, pp. 23-25; IEEE, New York, US; F.B. KAUFMAN : "New organic materials for use as transducers in electrochromic display devices"

(43) Date of publication of application:
07.10.1987 Bulletin 1987/41

Remarks:

(60) Divisional application: **96105850.0**

The file contains technical information submitted after the application was filed and not included in this specification

(73) Proprietor: **GENTEX CORPORATION**
Zeeland, Michigan 49464 (US)

(72) Inventor: **Byker, Harlan Jay**
Holland Michigan 49423 (US)

(74) Representative:
Baverstock, Michael George Douglas et al
BOULT WADE TENNANT
27 Furnival Street
London, EC4A 1PQ (GB)

EP 0 240 226 B1

Note: Within nine months from the publication of the mention of the grant of the European patent, any person may give notice to the European Patent Office of opposition to the European patent granted. Notice of opposition shall be filed in a written reasoned statement. It shall not be deemed to have been filed until the opposition fee has been paid. (Art. 99(1) European Patent Convention).

Description

The present invention relates to devices of reversibly variable transmittance to electromagnetic radiation, compositions for use as media of reversibly variable transmittance in such devices, and use of such devices in variable transmission light filters and variable reflectance mirrors. More particularly, the invention relates to single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices, solutions for use therein and uses thereof.

Several different types of devices are known wherein transmittance to electromagnetic radiation can be reversibly varied. Among such devices are those wherein the transmittance is changed by thermochromic, photochromic, or electro-optic (e.g., liquid crystal, dipolar suspension, electrophoretic, electrochromic) means and wherein the variable transmittance is to electromagnetic radiation that is at least partly in the visible range (wavelength from 4200Å to 7000Å).

Devices of reversibly variable transmittance to electromagnetic radiation have found application as the variable transmittance element in variable transmittance light-filters, variable reflectance mirrors, and display devices which employ such light-filters or mirrors in conveying information. These variable transmittance light filters have included windows. The variable reflectance mirrors have included anti-glare rearview mirrors for automotive vehicles.

Devices of reversibly variable transmittance to electromagnetic radiation, wherein the transmittance is altered by electrochromic means, including electrochemichromic devices, are described, for example, by Chang, "Electrochromic and Electrochemichromic Materials and Phenomena," in Non-emissive Electrooptic Displays, A. Kmetz and K. von Willisen, eds. Pergamon Press, New York, New York 1976, pp. 155-196 (1976). Electrochemichromic devices includes those wherein electrochemical reactions occur in a solid film, involve electroplating or occur entirely in solution. See Chang, *supra*.

Numerous electrochemichromic devices are known in the art. See, e.g., Manos, U.S. Patent No. 3,451,741; Bredfeldt et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,090,782; Shattuck and Sincerbox, U.S. Patent No. 4,093,358; Clecak et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,139,276; Kiss et al., U.S. Patent No. 3,453,038; Rogers, U.S. Patent Nos. 3,652,149, 3,774,988 and 3,873,185; and Jones et al., U.S. Patent Nos. 3,282,157, 3,282,158, 3,282,160 and 3,283,656; Tadashi Negishi, JP 57-208530, Shattuck, EP 12419, Papir and Schroeder, EP 145337 and Kaufman, "New Organic Materials for Use as Transducers in Electrochromic Display Device" published in Conference Record of 1978 Biennial Display Research Conference, Cherry Hill, NJ, 1978; IEEE, New York, NY (US). Among these devices are single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices. See, e.g., Manos, *supra*, Bredfeldt et al., *supra*; Shattuck and Sincerbox, *supra*; and Clecak et al., *supra*, Shattuck, *supra*.

In a single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic device, the intensity of electromagnetic radiation is modulated by passing through a solution held in the device in a compartment which includes two electrodes. The two electrodes are in contact with the solution. Between the electrodes, there is no barrier, such as a semi-permeable membrane, which would divide the solution compartment and prevent some components in the solution from diffusing or migrating from one electrode to the other. The solution includes a solvent and at least one "anodic" compound (which can be neutral or charged) and at least one "cathodic" compound (which also can be neutral or charged). The "anodic" compounds are electrochemically oxidized and the "cathodic" compounds are electrochemically reduced when a DC electrical potential difference is impressed across the solution between the electrodes. If none of the "anodic" compounds and "cathodic" compounds to be oxidized or reduced is charged, prior to oxidation or reduction, respectively, the solution will, and otherwise the solution may, include inert, current-carrying electrolyte. The electrochemical properties of the solvent, inert, current-carrying electrolyte, if any, anodic compounds, cathodic compounds, and any other components that might be present in the solution are preferably such that the anodic and cathodic compounds are oxidized and reduced, respectively, at a potential difference between the electrodes which does not cause any significant electrochemical or other changes in the other components in the solution. The solution is fluid during operation of the device, although it may be gelled or made highly viscous with a thickening agent. That the devices are "solution-phase" means that all of the components in the solution, including the anodic and cathodic compounds, remain in solution during operation of the device with the concomitant oxidation of anodic compounds and reduction of cathodic compounds.

Reversible modulation of intensity of electromagnetic radiation passing through a single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic device can be accomplished because of three factors related to operation of the device. First, the molar extinction coefficients of the anodic compounds and cathodic compounds in the solution of the device, as a function of wavelength, change with their electrochemical oxidation and reduction, respectively. Generally, at least one of these compounds undergoes a significant change in extinction coefficient at wavelengths in the visible range upon the oxidation or reduction; consequently, the solution and device change color or change from dark to clear or clear to dark when a potential difference is applied across the solution between the electrodes. Second, in the solution, the oxidized anodic compounds and reduced cathodic compounds do not, to any significant extent, undergo degradative reactions unimolecularly or with other components. Third, in the solution, the oxidized anodic compounds react substantially only with the reduced cathodic compounds to yield substantially only anodic compounds and cathodic compounds in their forms and with their properties prior to the oxidations and reductions, respectively. These

reactions of oxidized anodic compounds with reduced cathodic compounds provide the "self-erasing" feature to the device.

Heretofore, no single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices have been known which have proven to be suitable for commercial application as the component of reversibly variable transmittance in variable transmittance light filters or variable reflectance mirrors. For such applications, the solution of variable transmittance must be highly stable to cycling, at least several thousands of times, from zero potential difference between the electrodes to a potential difference between the electrodes that is sufficient to cause significant change in transmittance and then back to zero again. In a typical device, the Solution is held in a layer between planar, parallel, spaced-apart, transparent walls, on the inside surfaces of which (in contact with the solution) are coated thin layers of transparent, electrically conductive material which serve as electrodes and through which passes electromagnetic radiation whose intensity is reversibly modulated in the device. It is advantageous to have the solution layer as thin as possible, in order to minimize distortion of light passing through, or passing into and reflecting out of, a device, and to reduce to durations that are acceptable for commercial applications the "response time" required for the transmittance of a device to achieve a new steady-state value when the potential difference between the electrodes is changed. However, for devices with thin solution layers, anodic and cathodic electrochromic compounds must be found that, at concentrations in the solution at which they remain soluble, both at zero-potential equilibrium and when oxidized (in the case of anodic compounds) and reduced (in the case of cathodic compounds) when a potential difference is applied between the electrodes, give rise to sufficiently large changes in absorbance between their zero-potential equilibrium states and their "activated" (i.e., oxidized or reduced) states and at the same time remain sufficiently stable to cycling to provide a commercially practicable device. The present invention addresses the need for solutions to make commercially practicable single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices.

A useful feature in such devices, that has not heretofore been available, is the capability to function as a gray-scale device, i.e., to vary continuously and rapidly in transmittance to light in the visible wavelength range as a function of the potential difference applied between the electrodes of the device. Such a "gray-scale" device would find application in a window, which would allow light of constant intensity to pass through independently of the intensity of the light reaching the window, and an anti-glare rearview mirror in an automobile, that would reflect light of acceptable intensity to the driver regardless of the intensity of the glare-causing light incident on the mirror from headlamps of automobiles approaching the vehicle from behind. The present invention provides gray-scaling capability in single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices.

A problem that has not heretofore been recognized with solution-phase electrochromic devices is segregation, due to both migration and natural convection of anodic and cathodic electrochromic compounds. Particularly in devices that are operated continuously for long periods (more than about 20 minutes) with the planar surface through which light enters the device oriented vertically to the ground, such segregation can cause annoying and troublesome separation of color and reduction in speed of self-erasing. The present invention addresses this segregation problem.

Variable reflectance mirrors include a variable transmittance component, which is a device which has a transmittance to visible light which is reversibly varied by thermochromic, photochromic, or electro-optic means, and a reflection means, which is a highly reflective surface (such as a silver layer) from which light is reflected after passing through a medium of reversibly variable transmittance in the variable transmittance component. After reflecting from the reflection means, the reflected light passes back through the medium of reversibly variable transmittance. The medium of variable transmittance in such mirrors is typically held, in the variable transmittance components, between two planar, parallel, spaced-apart surfaces. At least one of these surfaces is transparent to light, and light reflected by the mirror enters and leaves through this transparent surface. A problem with such mirrors is the high "residual" reflectivity, which is usually greater than 5%, of this transparent surface of the variable transmittance component. For example, in an anti-glare rearview mirror for an automobile, wherein elimination of high glare may require reduction of reflectivity observed by the driver from all surfaces to as low as about 5 to 7%, the high residual reflectivity of the front surface of a typical mirror requires that the transmittance of the medium of reversibly variable transmittance in the mirror be capable of being made as low as about 3%. Because it is difficult to achieve such low transmittance with sufficient speed in preferably thin devices of reversibly variable transmittance, it would be advantageous to have variable reflectance mirrors wherein these problems caused by high residual reflectivity are avoided. The present invention provides such mirrors.

The present invention provides solutions for use as the medium of reversibly variable transmittance to electromagnetic radiation, particularly light in the visible range, in single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices.

The invention provides further such electrochromic devices, wherein a solution of the invention is the medium of reversibly variable transmittance; variable transmission light filters and variable reflectance mirrors, wherein the variable transmittance component is a single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase device according to the invention; and display devices wherein information is displayed by operation of variable transmission light filters or variable reflectance mirrors according to the invention.

EP 0 240 226 B1

The solutions of the invention render commercially practical the use of single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices and variable transmission light filters, variable reflectance mirrors and display devices employing such filters and mirrors. The solutions of the invention are unexpectedly highly stable to cycling of potential difference between the electrodes in devices of the invention.

5 In devices of the invention wherein the solution layer is desirably thin, and with concentrations of anodic and cathodic compounds in the solution that are low enough that precipitation does not occur and problems of segregation are substantially reduced, and at potential differences between the electrodes that are low enough to avoid significant degradation of the solution, the solution of the invention darken to an unexpectedly high absorbance to visible light with unexpectedly high speed once the potential difference is applied and clear again with unexpectedly high speed
10 once the electrodes are open-circuited or short-circuited. Advantageously, reversal of the polarity of the electrodes of a device of the invention is not required for clearing to occur with sufficient speed for many practical applications. Further, devices of the invention can advantageously be operated as gray-scale devices.

In another aspect, the present invention entails novel electrochromic compounds and combinations of compounds for use in solutions of the invention.

15 In still another aspect, the invention includes an improved variable reflectance mirror, wherein variable reflectance is provided by thermochromic, photochromic, or electro-optic means in a device of variable transmittance to electromagnetic radiation. In such an improved mirror of the invention, problems due to residual reflectivity from a planar surface through which light enters, and after reflecting from the reflecting means, leaves the mirror are avoided by displacing this planar surface at a slight angle to the highly reflective planar surface of the mirror which is its reflecting
20 means. Thereby, a person viewing the mirror need not see light due to residual reflectivity simultaneously with light that is reflected from the mirror's reflecting means.

FIGURE 1 displays schematically an exploded view of two planar, transparent, electrode-bearing sides, 100 and 130, of a device of the invention together with spacer or separating means, 11, which holds the electrode-bearing sides apart and substantially parallel in an assembled device of the invention and the inside edges, 11A, 11B, 11C and 11D of which, together with the electrode layers, 10A and 13A, of the electrode-bearing sides, defines a space, 12, which, in an assembled device of the invention, is occupied by a solution according to the invention that is in contact with the electrode layers.

25 FIGURE 2 illustrates schematically a partially assembled device, 200, according to the invention. FIGURE 2 shows, by cross-hatched area 14, the portion, of planar, transparent side 100 of the device, which overlays the solution of reversibly variable transmittance in the device and which, consequently, changes color, or changes from clear to dark and back, as the device is operated.

30 FIGURE 3 illustrates schematically a view of a cross-section of a partially assembled, improved variable reflectance mirror, 300, according to the invention, wherein the reflecting means is the highly reflective layer 18A of a prism-shaped mirror, 180, laminated to surface 131 of one transparent, electrode-bearing side, 130, of a variable transmittance device according to the invention.

35 FIGURE 4 illustrates schematically a view of a cross-section of a partially assembled, improved variable reflectance mirror, 400, according to the invention, wherein the reflecting means is a high reflectance layer, 20, on one electrode-bearing side, 130, of a variable transmittance device according to the invention and a transparent prism-shaped object, 22, is laminated to the surface 101 of the other electrode-bearing side, 100, of the variable transmittance device according to the invention.

40 In one of its aspects, the present invention is a solution, for use as the variable transmittance medium in a single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic device, which comprises:

- 45 (A) a solvent;
(B) at least one cathodic electrochromic compound which, in a voltammogram done with an inert electrode in the solvent at room temperature, displays at least two chemically reversible reduction waves, with the first of said reductions accompanied by an increase in molar extinction coefficient at at least one wavelength in the visible range;
50 (C) at least one anodic electrochromic compound which, in a voltammogram done with an inert electrode in the solvent at room temperature, displays at least two chemically reversible oxidation waves, with the first of said oxidations accompanied by an increase in molar extinction coefficient at at least one wavelength in the visible range; and
(D) if all cathodic and anodic compounds in their zero-potential equilibrium states in the solution are not ionic, an inert current-carrying electrolyte.

55 The solutions of the invention are optionally gelled or thickened by being combined with an agent, such as acrylic sheet material, derived, for example, from LUCITE LR.

In another of its aspects, the instant invention is a single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic

device which comprises, as the medium of reversibly variable transmittance to light, a solution of the invention. The solution of reversibly variable transmittance in a device of the invention is optionally gelled or thickened.

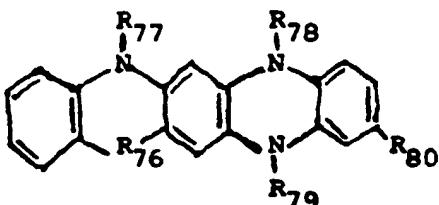
In another aspect, the present invention entails a variable transmittance light-filter which comprises, as the variable transmittance element, a single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase device of the invention.

5 In a further aspect, the invention entails a variable reflectance mirror which comprises, as the variable transmittance element, a single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase device of the invention.

In a still further aspect, the invention includes a display device which comprises, as an information-conveying element, a variable transmittance light filter or variable reflectance mirror according to the invention.

In another aspect, the invention includes a compound of Formula LII

10



LII

15

20

wherein R₇₆ is oxygen or sulfur, R₈₀ is hydrogen or dialkylamino, wherein the alkyl groups are the same or different and are each of 1 to 6 carbon atoms, and R₇₇, R₇₈ and R₇₉ are the same or different and are each selected from hydrogen, alkyl of 1 to 6 carbon atoms, phenyl optionally substituted at any one position with an alkyl group of 1 to 6 carbon atoms, and benzyl, optionally substituted at any one position of the phenyl group with an alkyl group of 1 to 6 carbon atoms.

25

In still another aspect, the present invention includes a variable reflectance mirror which comprises a device of reversibly variable transmittance, a planar front surface, and a planar reflecting means.

30

(A) said device comprising

- (i) a medium of transmittance which is reversibly varied by thermochromic, photochromic, or electro-optic means, and
- (ii) two planar, parallel, spaced-apart surfaces, between which the medium of reversibly variable transmittance is held and through which light passes prior to and after reflecting from said reflecting means; with

35

(B) the angle between the plane of said front surface and the plane of said reflecting means being about 1° to about 5°.

40

In the mirrors, a significant improvement arises from the positioning of the plane of the reflecting means at a slight angle to the plane of the front surface of the mirror, i.e., the surface through which light reflected by the mirror from the reflecting means enters and leaves the mirror. This positioning of these planes permits the mirror to be oriented so that light from outside the mirror that is reflected from the front surface of the mirror without entering the mirror (i.e., light from residual reflectivity of the front surface) is not seen by the person using the mirror while light reflected from the reflecting means is seen by such person. Thus, to reduce reflection (including reflected glare) from such a mirror, the residual reflectivity of the front surface of the mirror does not need to be overcome and, consequently, the extent to which the medium of reversibly variable transmittance needs to be darkened is reduced in comparison with the darkening that would be required if the reflecting means were parallel to the front surface. Further, various distortions in reflected images that occur, when both light reflected due to residual reflectivity of the front surface of a mirror and light reflected from the reflecting means of the mirror are observed, are avoided when only light from the reflecting means is seen.

50

Although any medium whose transmittance to visible light can be reversibly altered by thermochromic, photochromic, or electro-optic means can be employed as the medium of reversibly variable transmittance in these improved mirrors of the invention, it is most preferred that the medium be a solution according to the present invention (optionally gelled or thickened) and that the device of reversibly variable transmittance be a single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase device according to the present invention, which has two planar, parallel, spaced-apart sides, at least one of which is transparent (and through which light reflected by the mirror from the reflecting means passes prior to and after reflecting from the reflecting means) and the other of which, if not transparent, has a highly reflecting layer, which serves as the reflecting means of the mirror, adhered to its side opposite the side in contact with the solution.

Construction and operation of single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices, essentially the same as those of the present invention but having different solutions of reversibly variable transmittance, are known in the art. See Manos, Bredfeldt et al., Shattuck and Sincerbox, and Clecak et al., Shattuck, *supra*.

In Figure 1, the basic structural elements of a typical device of the invention are illustrated in an exploded view.

These elements include two planar electrode-bearing sides or walls, 100 and 130, a spacing or separating layer, 11, which spaces apart and holds parallel the walls 100 and 130 in an assembled device, and surrounds a space or volume, 12. Volume 12 is defined, in an assembled device, by electrode layers, 10A and 13A, of the electrode-bearing walls 100 and 130, respectively, as well as the four inside walls, 11A, 11B, 11C and 11D, of layer 11 (In Figure 1, inside walls 11B and 11C are hidden from view.). In an assembled device, volume 12 is filled (or nearly filled, in case room is left for expansion with temperature increase) with a solution according to the invention, which has reversibly variable transmittance in operation of the device. The solution in volume 12 is in contact with both electrode layers 10A and 13A during operation of the device.

Usually, and preferably, in an assembled device, walls 100 and 130, including electrode layers 10A and 13A, and the layers 10 and 13, respectively, of the solid material to which the electrode layers adhere, are planar and parallel. By "planar" and "parallel" in the present specification are meant planar and parallel, respectively, within normal tolerance limits, as understood in the art, taking account of possible slight variations arising from slight deviation in uniformity of thickness at different points (e.g., of each of layers 11, 10, 10A, 13 and 13A in the Figures), flexibility of materials, and the like.

However, it is to be understood that, as long as volume 12 can be sealed after being filled (or nearly filled) with solution, electrode-bearing layers 100 and 130 can be other than planar and can be spaced so that their inner, electrode layers are other than equidistant at each point (provided the electrode layers do not come into contact with each other). Further, although in the preferred devices layer 100 and layer 130 will be made from the same materials, having electrode layers (10A, 13A) of the same thickness and same material, having solid material layers (10, 13) of the same thickness and same material, and otherwise be essentially the same, it is not necessary that this be the case. The electrode layers, like the solid material layers, can be of different materials and different thicknesses.

In typical devices of the invention, solid material layers, 10 and 13, of walls 100 and 130, respectively, will be made of clear glass or clear plastic, between 0.05 cm and 1 cm thick, which are suitable for coating with layers of electrically conducting material, to form electrode layers 10A and 13A. Layers 10 and 13 can, however, be made of any material which is transparent and to which an electrically conducting material can be affixed to form electrode layers.

Electrode layers, 10A and 13A, can be made of any electrically conducting material than can be adhered in a layer to the material of solid material layers, 10 and 13, respectively, and that is essentially chemically inert to the solutions of reversibly variable transmittance that are employed in devices of the invention. Suitable materials for the electrode layers are thin, transparent layers of gold, tin oxide, ruthenium oxide, cadmium stannate, and indium-doped tin oxide ("ITO"), or thin, highly reflective layers of materials such as rhodium, or Inconel. Preferred is ITO. Methods of applying the electrically conducting material to the solid material, of layers 10 and 13, to form suitable electrode layers are known in the art. Preferably, as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, the electrode layer will cover the entire surface of a solid material layer, over the volume 12 and spacer 11 as well as on an extension of the solid material layer beyond an outside wall of spacer 11 (i.e., with reference to Figure 1, a wall of spacer 11 opposite wall 11A, 11B, 11C or 11D). The electrode layer will preferably have a thickness that is as uniform as possible over the entire surface of the solid material layer to which it is affixed; the thickness of the electrode layer will preferably be such that it has a resistivity of less than 100 ohms per square and, more preferably, less than 40 ohms per square. It is, however, not necessary that the electrode layer cover the entire solution volume of a device of the invention or extend outside the spacer which holds apart electrode-bearing walls of the device, as long as electrical contact can be made with the layer and, in operating the device, solution in the solution space is in contact with the electrode layer. Further, it is not required that the electrode layer have uniform thickness or that it have a resistivity less than 100 ohms per square.

It is also possible, in a device of the invention, to have one or both electrodes separate from solid material layers, such as 10 and 13 in the Figures. With reference to Figure 1, in place of electrode layers 10A and 13A, electrode strips could, for example, be situated along and parallel to sides 11B and 11D. Alternatively, one of electrode layers 10A and 13A could be replaced with an electrode plate or strip parallel to but not adhered to solid material layer 10 or 13, respectively. If the electrodes are separate from the solid material layers, the electrodes as well as the solid material layers are of material that is essentially chemically inert to solutions of the invention. In such devices, glass is a suitable material for the solid material layers and rhodium or platinum are suitable as electrodes.

The devices of the invention reversibly modulate the intensity of light that enters and leaves the device. Thus, in a device of the invention, at least part of at least one wall of the solution space is transparent to light of a range of wavelengths which includes at least a part of the range of wavelengths over which the transmittance of the solution of the invention in the solution space is reversibly varied in operation of the device. In the typical device, the entire area of both walls of the solution space will be transparent to light of all wavelengths in at least the visible range.

In a preferred variable transmittance light filter according to the invention, the device of reversibly variable trans-

mittance will be a device according to the invention wherein both walls of the solution space (e.g., 100 and 130 in Figure 1) are transparent to visible light of all wavelengths.

To prepare a variable reflectance mirror according to the invention, a highly reflecting layer, such as of silver, can be applied to the outside (i.e., the side opposite the solution) of one of the transparent walls of the solution volume of a device according to the invention, wherein, but for the reflecting layer, both walls of the solution space would be transparent. Alternatively, a variable reflectance mirror can be made by employing for one of the electrode layers defining the solution space in a device, a highly reflecting, electrically conductive material such as rhodium or Inconel.

As described further below, transparent walls of a device of the invention, defining the solution volume, can be joined, bonded or laminated to plates of glass or plastic, mirrors, and the like to make variable transmittance light filters and variable reflectance mirrors according to the invention wherein variable transmittance to light is provided by a device of the invention.

In the present specification, "transparent" to light of a range of wavelengths means that at least some light, of all wavelengths in the range, passes through, instead of being absorbed or reflected. Use of the word "transparent" without qualification means transparency to light of a range of wavelengths which includes at least all wavelengths in the visible range (wavelength from 4200 Å to 7000 Å). Typically, and as a practical matter, a transparent wall of the solution volume of a device of the invention will allow at least about 90% of the light, at all wavelengths in the visible range, that is incident on it to pass through, rather than be reflected or absorbed.

In contrast, a "highly reflecting" surface, within the meaning of the present specification, is one that reflects, rather than transmits or absorbs, at least about 50%, and more typically at least about 70%, of light of all wavelengths in an identified range. If used without qualification, a surface that is "highly reflecting" is one that is so to light of all wavelengths at least in the visible range.

The spacer, denoted as 11 in the Figures, is electrically insulating and is made of a combination of a sealing material, such as epoxy resin, silicones, rubber cement, low melting glass, certain plastics, paraffin wax, or the like, with a spacing material such as small glass beads, nylon monofilament, MYLAR® strips, polystyrene beads or the like.

As indicated above, the space is preferably of substantially uniform thickness so that the two walls defining the solution space in a device can be held essentially parallel to each other. Although shown schematically as planar in Figure 1, the inside edges 11A, 11B, 11C and 11D of the spacer, and the outside edges opposite the inside edges, are in reality curved or rough edged. This curvature or roughness will be clear from the manner by which a typical device is assembled: by placing strips of a (highly viscous) mixture, of sealing material with spacing material, around an area on the inside (i.e., electrode layer bearing side) of one wall of a device and then pressing the other wall of the device, with its inside (i.e., electrode-bearing side) wall facing the inside of the first wall, against the strips until both walls contact the separating means. This pressing squeezes excess sealing material in the strips from the strips and causes the outside and inside edges of the strips to be curved or uneven. In the devices of the invention, the separating material in the spacer holds the inside (i.e., electrode-bearing) surfaces of walls between about 0.0025 to about 0.05 cm apart. A preferred spacer is a combination of glass beads with epoxy resin sealant.

The electrodes of a device of the invention are connected to, or capable of being connected to, a DC power source, whereby an electrical potential can be impressed between the electrodes and across the solution in a device. In the device illustrated schematically in Figure 2, a preferred arrangement for connecting the electrodes to a power source is illustrated. In this arrangement, the two electrode-bearing walls are displaced in opposite directions, laterally from but parallel to the solution space, in order to provide an exposed strip of each of the electrode surfaces. To each of these exposed strips is adhered, so as to be in electrical contact with the strip along nearly its entire exposed length, an electrically conductive strip or wire, such as a copper, aluminium or silver strip or wire. One such strip, 16, is shown in its entirety in Figure 2 and in cross-section in Figures 3 and 4. Only the lead or extension, 15A, of the other strip 15 of the device of Figure 2 is seen in Figure 2. Strip 15 is seen in cross-section in Figures 3 and 4. Like strip 16 affixed to electrode-layer 13A, strip 15 is affixed to electrode layer 10A along essentially the entire length of the overhang of the electrode layer. Although any means known in the art can be employed to secure the wire or strip in electrical contact with the electrode surface, such as clamping, soldering or securing with a conductive adhesive, a preferred means is to use a conductive epoxy, such as standard silver epoxy. The strips or wires affixed to the electrode surfaces have leads or extensions, illustrated by 15A and 16A in Figure 2 beyond the ends of the electrode surfaces. Connection to a suitable power source is effected by standard electrical connection from the power source to these leads or extensions.

Assembly of a device of the invention can be carried out as understood in the art. See Manos, *supra*. A preferred method for assembling a device is as follows:

A strip of spacer material, consisting of a separating material, such as glass beads, mixed with a sealing material, such as insulating epoxy, is deposited on one surface of the device (on the electrode surface thereof, in the preferred case wherein the surface of the device is a planar piece of solid material, such as glass, to which is affixed or adhered a layer of electrically conducting material to serve as an electrode) to outline a cross-sectional area, of desired size and shape, for the solution volume. The solution volume is then formed by placing the other surface of the device over

the strip of spacer material, so that the electrode layers of the surfaces face each other, and then applying pressure to the two surfaces to cause them to approach each other until they are separated substantially only by the separating material in the spacer. If the solution used with the device is to be thickened by combination with a thickener, such as acrylic sheet material, as derived from LUCITE LR, a solution of the thickener in a volatile solvent such as dichloroethane, acetone or methyl ethylketone is conveniently painted or sprayed on the entire area outlined by the spacer on the first wall, and the solvent allowed to evaporate, prior to application of the second wall. After the assembly process, and prior to filling with a solution, the sealing material of the spacer is allowed to cure, if necessary, to become inert to the solution; such curing is necessary when the solvent of the solution is propylene carbonate and the sealing material is insulating epoxy.

10 The shape of the solution volume, viewed in cross-section through the electrode-bearing walls, is not constrained to be square or rectangular. It can be circular, elliptical, polygonal, in the shape of a letter or numeral, or any desired shape.

15 One of the walls of a device of the invention has bored therein (prior to assembly) two small holes located, in the assembled device, over and near the edge of, the solution volume (e.g., with reference to Figure 1, one near inside wall 11A and the other near inside wall 11B). The device is filled with solution of the invention through these holes by passing solution in through one of them while allowing air to escape out the other. After the filling, the two holes are sealed first with a conventional thermoplastic material inert to the solution and secondarily with a sealant such as, for example, insulating epoxy.

20 Then conducting wires or strips, usually copper strips, are adhered, usually with a conducting epoxy such as a standard silver epoxy, to the exposed portions of both electrode surfaces. Finally, employing the sealing material used in the spacer, the wires or strips, except for the leads or projections thereof through which contact with a power source is made, are sealed over, as is the entire periphery of the device, i.e., the outside of the rim or sides which include the spacer.

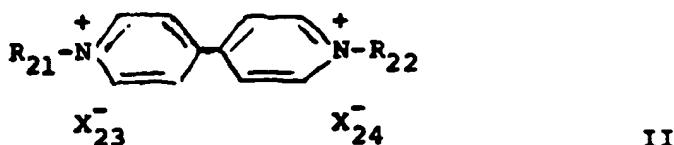
25 For solvent in a solution of the invention, any compound, or mixture of compounds, can be employed, which is liquid over the range of temperatures, at which the solution of the invention is to be used as the medium of reversibly variable transmittance in a device of the invention, and which is known to be useful as a solvent in the electrochemical arts. As a practical matter, for convenience in preparing the solutions and because devices of the invention usually will be operated over a range of temperatures which includes room temperature, a solvent will be liquid over at least the range between 20°C and 27°C (i.e., room temperature). Further, it is preferred, for the sake of stability of devices of the invention, that the solvent of solution of the invention not undergo electrolysis or be involved in other, irreversible chemical reactions, during storage or normal operation of a device. Suitable as solvents are water, methanol, ethanol, acetonitrile, N,N-dimethylformamide, dimethylsulfoxide, acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, cyclopantanone, and cyclic esters, including propylene carbonate, ethylene carbonate, β -propiolactone, β -butyrolactone, gamma-butyrolactone, gamma-valerolactone, delta-valerolactone or homogeneous (i.e., single-phase) mixtures of them. It is preferred that the solvents be substantially free of dissolved oxygen and, but for water, be anhydrous. Preferred solvents are the cyclic esters or combinations thereof. Most preferred is propylene carbonate.

30 In a solution of the invention, there is at least one cathodic electrochromic compound, at a concentration at 25°C of at least 10^{-4} M up to its solubility, but more usually between about 0.01 M and 0.1 M, which, in the solvent of the solution, as determined by standard voltammetric techniques at an inert electrode at room temperature, has at least two chemically reversible (i.e., not necessarily kinetically reversible, as understood in the electrochemical arts) reduction waves, the first of these reductions being accompanied by an increase in the extinction coefficient of the cathodic compound at at least one wavelength in the visible range. Further, in a solution of the invention, there is at least one anodic electrochromic compound, at a concentration at 25°C of at least 10^{-4} M up to its solubility, but more usually between about 0.01 M and 0.1 M, which, in the solvent of the solution, as determined by standard voltammetric techniques at an inert electrode at room temperature, has at least two chemically reversible (as understood in the electrochemical arts) oxidation waves, the first of these oxidations being accompanied by an increase in the extinction coefficient of the anodic compound at at least one wavelength in the visible range.

35 Usually it is intended that, upon application of a potential difference across the solution between the electrodes of a device of the invention, the solution change from clear to dark or change color. Thus, it is desirable that the first chemically reversible reduction of a cathodic electrochromic compound or first chemically reversible oxidation of an anodic electrochromic compound employed in a solution of the invention be accompanied by an increase in extinction coefficient, in the solvent of the solution at room temperature, of a factor of at least about 10^2 to at least about $10^3 \text{ cm}^{-1} \text{M}^{-1}$ at at least one wavelength in the visible range.

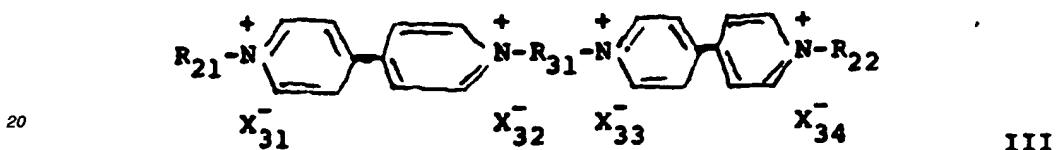
40 Among the cathodic electrochromic compounds suitable for solutions of the invention are the known compounds of Formula II (viologens)

5



wherein R₂₁ and R₂₂ are the same or different and are each selected from alkyl of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, phenyl optionally substituted at any one position with chloride, bromide, iodide, cyano, or an alkyl group of 1 to 4 carbon atoms, and benzyl, wherein the phenyl group is optionally substituted at any one position with chloride, bromide, iodide, cyano, or an alkyl group of 1 to 4 carbon atoms; and wherein X₂₃⁻ and X₂₄⁻ are the same or different and are each selected from chloride, bromide, iodide, BF₄⁻, PF₆⁻, AsF₆⁻, ClO₄⁻ and NO₃⁻; and the known compounds of Formula III

15

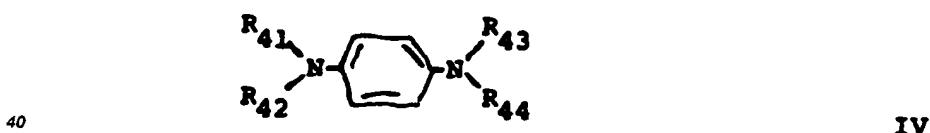


wherein R₂₁ and R₂₂ are the same or different and are defined as above for the compound of Formula II, R₃₁ is alkylene of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, and X₃₁⁻, X₃₂⁻, X₃₃⁻ and X₃₄⁻ are the same or different and each selected from chloride, bromide, iodide, BF₄⁻, PF₆⁻, AsF₆⁻, ClO₄⁻ and NO₃⁻.

The preferred compounds of Formulas II and III are those wherein all of the anions are the same and are ClO₄⁻ or BF₄⁻. Most preferred is BF₄⁻. The preferred cations of compounds of Formula II are those wherein R₂₁ and R₂₂ are the same and are benzyl, phenyl or n-heptyl; most preferred is benzyl. The most preferred cation of compounds of Formula III is that wherein R₃₁ is -(CH₂)₄- and R₂₁ and R₂₂ are the same and are benzyl (i.e., tetramethylene bis[4(1-benzyl-pyridine-4'-yl)pyridinium]).

Among the anodic electrochromic compounds suitable for solutions of the invention are the known compounds of Formula IV

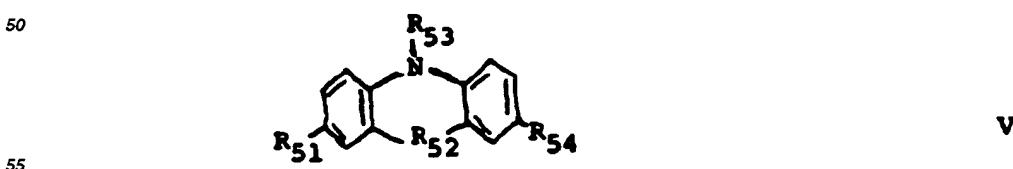
35



40

wherein R₄₁, R₄₂, R₄₃ and R₄₄ are the same or different and are each selected from hydrogen, alkyl of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, phenyl optionally substituted at any one position with chloride, bromide, iodide, cyano, or an alkyl group of 1 to 4 carbon atoms, and benzyl, wherein the phenyl moiety is optionally substituted at any one position with chloride, bromide, iodide, cyano, or an alkyl group of 1 to 4 carbon atoms; the known compounds of Formula V

50

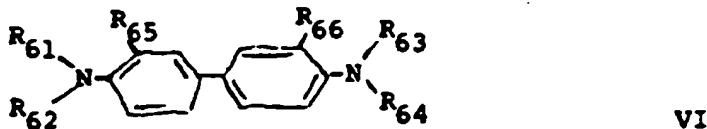


55

wherein R₅₁ and R₅₄ are the same or different and are each selected from hydrogen and dialkylamino, wherein the alkyl groups are the same or different and are each of 1 to 6 carbon atoms; R₅₂ is oxygen, sulfur or NR₅₅.

wherein R₅₅ is the same as or different from R₅₃ and both R₅₅ and R₅₃ are selected from hydrogen, alkyl of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, phenyl optionally substituted at any one position with chloride, bromide, iodide, cyano, or alkyl of 1 to 4 carbon atoms, or benzyl, optionally substituted at any one position of the phenyl group with chloride, bromide, iodide, cyano, or alkyl of 1 to 4 carbon atoms;

5 the known compounds of Formula VI

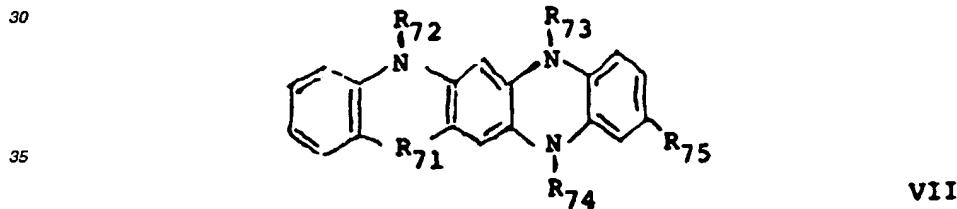


15 wherein R₆₁, R₆₂, R₆₃ and R₆₄ are the same or different and are each selected from alkyl of 1 to 10 carbon atoms or phenyl; and R₆₅ and R₆₆ are the same or different and are each selected from hydrogen or alkyl of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, provided that both R₆₅ and R₆₆ are hydrogen or both are alkyl, and if R₆₅ and R₆₆ are both hydrogen, not more than one of R₆₁ and R₆₂ is hydrogen and not more than one of R₆₃ and R₆₄ is hydrogen;

20 the known compound of Formula VIII (tetrathiafulvalene)



Also suitable as an anodic compound in solutions of the invention is a novel compound of the invention, of Formula VII



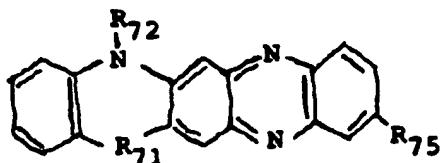
40 wherein R₇₁ is oxygen or sulfur, R₇₅ is hydrogen or dialkylamino, wherein the alkyl groups are the same or different and are each selected from alkyl of 1 to 6 carbon atoms, and R₇₂, R₇₃ and R₇₄ are the same or different and are each selected from hydrogen, alkyl of 1 to 6 carbon atoms, phenyl, optionally substituted at any one position with an alkyl group of 1 to 6 carbon atoms, and benzyl, optionally substituted at any one position of the phenyl group with an alkyl group of 1 to 6 carbon atoms.

45 Most preferred among the compounds of Formula VII is that wherein R₇₁ is oxygen, R₇₅ is hydrogen and R₇₂, R₇₃ and R₇₄ are all methyl.

Preferred among the anodic electrochromic compounds for solutions of the invention are those of Formulas IV and V. More preferred are those of Formula IV wherein R₄₁, R₄₂, R₄₃ and R₄₄ are the same and are methyl or phenyl, and those of Formula V wherein R₅₁ and R₅₄ are hydrogen, R₅₂ is the same as N-R₅₃ and R₅₃ is methyl or phenyl. Most preferred are N,N,N',N'-tetramethyl-1,4-phenylene diamine and 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine.

50 Preparation of the novel compounds of the invention, of Formula VII, follows known procedures of Gilman and Dietrick (J. Amer. Chem. Soc. 79, 6178 (1957)), beginning with the known compound of Formula XX

5

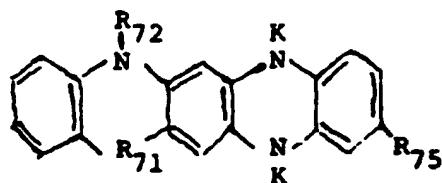


XX

10

wherein R₇₁, R₇₂ and R₇₃ are as defined above for compounds of Formula VII, to form the potassium adduct of Formula XXI

15



XXI

20

and then reacting the adduct with a mixture of compounds of Formula R₇₃I and R₇₄I where R₇₃ and R₇₄ are as defined above for the compound of Formula VII and can be the same, to yield the desired product after crystallization. This synthetic procedure is illustrated in Example XI, with the synthesis of the preferred N,N',N"-trimethyltriphenazinoxazine.

A solution of the invention will include inert, current-carrying electrolyte, if none of the cathodic electrochromic compounds and anodic electrochromic compounds, in their zero-potential equilibrium states in the solution, is ionic, and otherwise may optionally include such inert, current-carrying electrolyte. The inert, current-carrying electrolyte will, during normal operation of a device of the invention, carry current across the solution between the electrodes and, during storage or normal operation of a device, will not undergo electrolysis or other irreversible chemical reactions with other substances in the device so as to impair the stability of the device.

The inert, current-carrying electrolyte in a solution of the invention will consist of any combination of substances known in the art to be suitable for inert, current-carrying electrolyte (sometimes referred to in the art as "supporting electrolyte"). Such substances include alkali metal salts, tetraalkylammonium salts, and aluminium chloride and bromide. Preferred as cations in inert, current-carrying electrolyte in solutions of the invention are lithium, sodium, and tetraalkylammonium, wherein the alkyl groups are the same; most preferred is tetra-n-butylammonium. Preferred as anions in inert, current-carrying electrolytes in solutions of the invention are chloride, BF₄⁻ and ClO₄⁻; most preferred in BF₄⁻. The concentration of inert, current-carrying electrolyte, if present in the solution of the invention, will be between 0.005 M to 2 M at 25°C. More preferably, it will be between 0.05 M and 0.5 M at 25°C.

The solutions of the invention are for use as the variable transmittance medium in a single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic device. Because the devices are "solution-phase", the concentrations of substances in the solution, for a device to be operated over a given temperature range with the potential applied across the solution not exceeding a given maximum, must be such that precipitation of substances from the solution does not occur, both at zero-potential equilibrium and during operation of a device, when cathodic electrochromic material(s) is (are) being reduced at the cathode and anodic electrochromic material(s) is (are) being oxidized at the anode. Generally, provided that, at zero-potential equilibrium at all temperatures in the range of intended use, all substances are present in the solution at concentrations below their solubilities, precipitation will not occur during operation of a device which includes the solution as the medium of reversibly variable transmittance.

The "self-erasing" property of devices of the invention means that, after a potential difference between the electrodes of a device is decreased or eliminated, the transmittance of the solution in the device will increase spontaneously, without need for reversal of the polarity of the electrodes, to a value characteristic of the new potential difference. The "self-erasing" feature of the devices of the present invention is provided by the spontaneous, apparently diffusion-limited, reactions of oxidized anodic compounds with reduced cathodic compounds to yield anodic compounds and cathodic compounds in their respective zero-potential equilibrium states.

It is important, in practical applications of the devices of the invention, that both decrease in transmittance of the solution of a device, that occurs when the potential difference between the electrodes is increased, and the increase

is transmittance of the solution of a device, that occurs with self-erasing, occur sufficiently rapidly. It is generally advantageous that both decrease and increase in transmittance occur as rapidly as possible. Until the instant invention, cathodic and anodic compounds meeting the voltammographic and colorimetric criteria specified above, were not combined in a solution. It has not been realized in the art that, by having both cathodic and the anodic compounds in a single-compartment, solution-phase electrochromic device that undergo increases in absorbance in the wavelength range of interest, with reduction and oxidation, respectively, that the speed of transmittance decrease could be a speed acceptable for commercial application of such devices without causing commercial application-defeating loss in the speed of transmittance increase, by self-erasing, made possible by the solution-phase characteristic of the devices.

Further, for practical applications of devices of the invention, it is important that the solutions in the devices be stable, both during periods when the device is not being operated and during cycling (i.e., when the potential between the electrodes of a device is cycled between zero or a low value to a higher value and back and, as a result, the transmittance of the solution in the device varies reversibly between higher and lower values). Lack of stability is indicated by an increase in absorbance of white light, or light of wavelengths at which absorbance is varied with the device, passing through the device, including the solution therein, when the solution is at zero-potential equilibrium, i.e., equilibrium with no potential difference between the electrodes of the device.

A problem preventing commercial application of single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices has been the lack of stability of the solutions of variable transmittance employed with them. While the reasons for this instability of prior art devices are not entirely clear, they might be related to the chemical instability, and high reactivity, with solvent and other materials, of either or both of the anodic and cathodic compounds, in their oxidized and reduced states, respectively, that have been used in prior art solutions. The present invention has solved this problem with discovery that, with cathodic and anodic electrochromic compounds satisfying the above-specified voltammographic criteria, a property of the solutions of the invention is exceedingly and unexpectedly high stability, particularly stability to cycling.

It has been found that the stability of the solutions of the invention is further enhanced by minimizing in the solutions the concentration of oxygen and, if the solvent is non-aqueous, water. Thus, optionally but preferably, a device of the invention is flushed with dry nitrogen or other inert gas prior to being filled with solution. Standard techniques are employed to reduce the concentrations of oxygen and, if solvent is non-aqueous, water, in solvent and solutes used to prepare solutions and to minimize contamination of solutions with oxygen and water prior to filling the devices with the solutions and sealing the filled devices. For example, dry nitrogen can be bubbled through solutions prior to filling to reduce oxygen concentration. Solvent can be treated by passing over a dessicant, such as activated alumina, to reduce water contamination, prior to being used to prepare a solution. In addition, solutes (electrochromic compounds; inert, current-carrying electrolyte) can be dried prior to use to prepare solutions by heating to about 110°C. Alternatively, prepared solutions can be passed through a dessicant, such as activated alumina, prior to filling a device with them.

Other than any of the aforementioned measures, that might be taken to reduce the concentrations of oxygen and water in solutions of the invention, solutions of the invention are prepared by standard methods, usually at room temperature, by simply dissolving the appropriate amounts of solutes in the solvent to achieve the desired concentrations.

Certain advantages are realized by employing thickened or gelled solutions as the media of reversibly variable transmittance in devices of the invention. As described supra and further below, it has been discovered in connection with the present invention that segregation is a problem with single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices when they are operated continuously for long periods. Gelling or thickening the solutions of the invention reduces the significance of the segregation problem by reducing the component of the segregation that is due to natural convection.

Another advantage realized by using gelled or thickened solutions in the devices of the invention relates to convenience and safety. If a device should be opened, as by breaking one of the transparent sides or otherwise, a gelled or thickened solution would flow much more slowly than a non-gelled or non-thickened one and, consequently, the ease of cleaning up the solution would be increased and the risk of persons' contacting any noxious or harmful substances than might be present in the solution would be reduced. In devices, wherein the transparent sides or other elements might shatter or splinter during breakage, a gelled or thickened solution would tend to hold the broken pieces in place and thereby reduce the risk of injury that might occur if the device broke apart.

The terms "thicken" and "gel" are used interchangeably in the instant specification and refer to the increase in viscosity of a solution that results from combining it with certain substances, whether or not a true gel is formed in the process. Any substance which can thicken a solution, without reacting to form covalent bonds with solvent, inert, current-carrying electrolyte or anodic or cathodic compounds therein, can be employed to thicken or gel a solution of the invention. The desired amount of thickening or gelling substance can simply be combined with solution, just prior to filling a device, provided there is sufficient time for such filling prior to the solution's becoming too viscous. Alternatively, the desired amount of thickening or gelling substance can be placed into a device before or after introduction of solution and the mixture with solution be accomplished in situ in the solution space of the device; an example of this method, in which the thickener is introduced before the solution, is provided in Example X.

The concentration of thickening or gelling substance employed to prepare a thickened or gelled solution of the invention will vary, depending on a number of factors, as understood by the skilled. These factors include the thickening or gelling substance employed, the solvent employed and the desired viscosity of the thickened or gelled solution. With the preferred solvent, propylene carbonate, and the preferred thickener for this solvent, the composition obtained by dissolving the acrylic sheet material sold under the trademark LUCITE L, in an organic solvent such as acetone, methyl ethyl ketone or dichloroethane, the concentration of thickener in solution will be between about 3% (w/w) and about 30% (w/w), preferably between about 5% (w/w) to about 25% (w/w), and most preferably between about 7% (w/w) and about 15% (w/w).

Manos, supra, lists certain other thickeners which can be employed to make thickened or gelled solutions of the invention. It has been found in connection with this invention, with propylene carbonate solvent, that the composition, obtained by dissolving the acrylic sheet material sold under the trademark PLEXIGLAS in an organic solvent such as acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, or dichloroethane, can also be used for the thickening.

The preferred thickener is obtained by mixing a solvent, such as dichloroethane (1,2-dichloroethane, 1,1-dichloroethane or mixtures of the 1,1 and 1,2 isomers) with the commercially available acrylic sheet material, LUCITE L^R, separating the resulting solution from any residue, and, finally, allowing the solvent to evaporate. The residue left after the solvent evaporates is the "acrylic sheet material thickener."

It has been discovered unexpectedly, in connection with the instant invention, that using this preferred thickener is unusually convenient and exceptionally suitable for constructing devices of the invention which employ propylene carbonate solutions as media of reversibly variable transmittance. This convenience and suitability is due to the facts, illustrated in Example X, that a quantity of thickener can be placed in a device by simply painting or spraying the solution of the thickener on the electrode-bearing side of a wall of the device and then allowing the solvent to evaporate before assembling the device and that the thickener inside the device is spontaneously taken up by and thickens a propylene carbonate solution of the invention, after the assembled device is filled with the solution in the usual manner.

An unexpected and highly desirable property, discovered in connection with the instant invention, of solutions of the invention thickened with the preferred acrylic sheet material thickener is that the time required for coloring of a device wherein such a solution is employed as the medium of reversibly variable transmittance is not significantly increased over the time required for coloring in a device which is the same but for having no thickener in the solution. Thus, with such thickener, the aforementioned advantages of using a thickened solution as the medium of reversibly variable transmittance in a device of the invention can be realized without significant effect on the advantage, of rapid coloring, of devices which employ non-thickened solutions of the invention as media of reversibly variable transmittance.

To be operated, a device of the invention is connected to a power source capable of establishing a potential difference of constant polarity between the electrodes of the device. Referring to Figures 1 and 2, this connection is effected through leads 15A and 16A of the electrically conducting wires or strips affixed to the electrode layers of the walls of the device so as to be in electrically conductive contact with the electrode layers. The power source can be any AC or DC power source known in the art; however, if an AC source, control elements, such as diodes, are placed between the power source and the electrodes of the device to insure that the potential difference between the electrodes does not change in polarity with variations in polarity of the potential from the source. Suitable DC power sources are storage batteries, such as automobile batteries and dry cell batteries. The power from the power source delivered to the electrodes of the device is controlled by any means known in the art so that the potential across the solution between the electrodes of the device does not exceed the potential difference at which irreversible reactions, such as electrolysis of solvent, reduction or oxidation of inert, current-carrying electrolyte, unimolecular degradation reactions of electrochromic compounds and the like, occur. Preferably, to make use of the gray-scaling capability of the devices of the invention, the control of power delivered to the electrodes of the device will be such that the potential can be varied, over a range from about 0.1 volt to a potential somewhat below that at which irreversible reactions occur to a significant extent in the device, but held constant at any desired potential in this range. There will also be a switching means associated with the power source so that the potential between the electrodes of the device can be reduced to zero, by open-circuiting or short-circuiting. Because, in certain instances, the additional speed in self-erasing that can be achieved by applying a potential for a brief period (e.g., about 0.5 to about 5 seconds) to the electrodes, with polarity reversed from that during decreasing transmittance, the switch means may also include means for accomplishing such reversals. The means for controlling the potential delivered to the electrodes and the switching means can be either manually or automatically operated.

In order for the electrochromic compounds in the solutions of the invention to be oxidized and reduced, and thereby cause decrease in transmittance of the solution, the potential difference between the electrodes must be high enough to cause a current to flow across the solution between the electrodes. A potential difference between about 0.3 volts and about 0.5 volts is usually adequate to cause current to flow and solution of the invention to begin to darken or change color.

The extent of darkening at steady state in a particular device of the invention will depend on the potential difference

between the electrodes; because of this property the devices of the invention are useful as "gray-scale" devices.

The maximum potential that can be applied between the electrodes of a device without impairing the stability of the solution will, as the skilled understand, depend on a number of factors, such as the potential at which electrolysis of solvent occurs and potentials at which degradative reactions of electrochromic compounds occur. Devices of the invention wherein water is solvent in the solution will generally be operated at less than about 1.4 volts to avoid electrolysis of water. The devices of the present invention with cyclic ether solvents can, in some cases, be operated at a potential difference as high as about 4 volts across the solution layer. Generally, however, the potential across the solution layer in devices of the invention is kept below 2 volts.

The skilled will understand that, at steady state at a given potential across the solution layer of a device of the invention, cathodic electrochromic compounds are being reduced and anodic electrochromic compounds are being oxidized continuously at the electrodes while, at the same time and at the same rate at which electrochemical oxidation and reduction are occurring, reduced cathodic compounds are being oxidized back, and oxidized anodic compounds reduced back, to their zero-potential equilibrium forms by reaction of reduced cathodic with oxidized anodic compounds. The rate at which the steady-state is achieved, at a given potential across the solution of a device, is dependent on the current across the solution at the potential. This current is generally not regarded as an independent variable in operation of the devices, as it depends on other factors which are independently varied, such as the conductivity of the solution in the device (which in turn depends on solution composition, including composition of inert, current-carrying electrolyte), and the potential across the solution. However, the currents that flow during normal device operation are typically in the range of 0.1 to 20 milliamperes per square centimeter of cathodic or anode area in contact with solution layer.

As indicated, supra, a problem that has been discovered in connection with the present invention is that segregation occurs in single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices that are operated continuously (i.e., held at non-zero potential) for long periods, longer than about 20 minutes. This segregation appears to be similar to the segregation that is encountered in operation of large scale electrochemical cells. Thus, the segregation found in devices of the instant invention has a component due to migration of charged electrochromic compounds in electrical potential gradients in the solution layer of a device and a component due to natural convection, which arises from different local densities, one higher and one lower than bulk solution density, around oxidized anodic and reduced cathodic molecules.

Segregation in devices of the invention is preferably avoided because it gives rise to annoying color separation in the solution layer of devices of the invention and slows the rate at which the devices self-erase.

As indicated, supra, one method for reducing at least the natural convection component of segregation in devices of the invention is to employ a thickened or gelled solution of the invention as the medium of reversibly variable transmittance.

It has also been found in connection with the invention that segregation can be substantially eliminated in a device of the invention by

- (a) employing in the device a solution of the invention which (i) has concentrations of cathodic and anodic electrochromic compounds at the lower end of the concentration range that is acceptable for achieving sufficient reduction of transmittance in the solution for the uses in which the device is to be employed, and (ii) has a concentration of current-carrying electrolyte which is at least twice and preferably at least ten times the higher of the total concentration of anodic or total concentration of cathodic compounds; and
- (b) with reference to Figure 2, orienting the device so that one of the conducting strips or wires (16 and the strip or wire (not shown) of which lead 15A is an extension) is higher (i.e., further from the surface of the Earth) than the other and, in applying a potential to the device, to decrease or maintain below the zero-potential equilibrium value the transmittance of the solution in the device, placing the higher conducting strip or wire at the higher potential (so that the electrode to which it is attached is the anode).

For example, when oriented as just described, devices of the invention which have as medium of variable transmittance the solution described in Example XII, when operated continuously at 1.0 volts for 24 hours show no appreciable segregation.

In its final aspect, the instant invention relates to improved variable reflectance mirrors, preferred embodiments of which are illustrated schematically, in cross-sectional views, in mirrors 300 and 400 of Figures 3 and 4, respectively. As described, supra, the improvement in these mirrors arises from the positioning of the planar reflecting means, shown as 18A in Figure 3 and 20 in Figure 4, at a slight angle to the planar front surface of the mirror, which is shown as surface 101 of solid material layer 10 of wall 100 of mirror 300 in Figure 3 and surface 221 of prism-shaped piece 22 of mirror 400 in Figure 4. The front surface of the mirror is the surface through which light passes to enter and leave the mirror.

These mirrors of the invention comprise a device of reversibly variable transmittance through which light passes

before and after reflecting from the reflecting means.

The device of reversibly variable transmittance is characterized by two planar, parallel, spaced-apart surfaces which are transparent to light of at least the wavelengths at which reflectance of the mirror is varied, and preferably to light of all wavelengths in at least the visible range, and between which is located a medium of absorbance which is reversibly variable by thermochromic, photochromic or electro-optic means in operation of the device. With reference to mirror 300 illustrated in Figure 3 and mirror 400 illustrated in Figure 4, these surfaces are surface 101 of solid material layer 10 and surface 131 of solid material layer 13.

Although, in mirrors 300 and 400 of Figures 3 and 4, respectively, the devices of reversibly variable transmittance, with surfaces 101 and 131, are electrochromic devices that are substantially the same as the device of the present invention illustrated in Figure 2, the improved mirrors of the invention are not limited to having single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices according to the instant invention as the device of reversibly variable transmittance. Any device of transmittance varied by thermochromic, photochromic or electro-optic means can be employed to vary the reflectance of an improved mirror of the invention, provided that the medium of variable transmittance is held in such device between two planar, parallel, spaced-apart surfaces which are transparent to light of at least the wavelengths at which the reflectance of the mirror is to be varied. A number of types electro-optic devices, suitable for this purpose, are known (e.g., liquid crystal devices, dipolar suspension devices, electrophoretic devices, two-compartment electrochemichromic devices such as described by Kiss, *supra*).

In one type of improved, variable reflectance mirror according to the invention, which is illustrated by mirror 300 of Figure 3, a prism-shaped mirror, 180, is laminated through a transparent laminating material, indicated by layer 19, to a surface, 131, of the device of reversibly variable transmittance. The prism-shaped mirror could be, for example, a conventional prism-shaped mirror employed in rearview mirrors of automobiles. The prism-shaped mirror consists essentially of a prism-shaped piece, 18, of transparent solid material, such as of glass or a clear plastic, and a layer, 18A, of highly reflective material, such as silver, adhered to a surface of the solid material by any standard technique in the mirror-fabricating art so that a high fraction, preferably at least about 80%, of the light passing through the solid material and reaching the reflective material layer is reflected back through the solid material. The highly reflective surface of the prism-shaped mirror covers at least the entire cross-sectional area, illustrated by 14 in Figure 2 but not shown in the cross-sectional view of Figure 3, of reversibly variable transmittance of the device of reversibly variable transmittance of the improved mirror. Highly reflective layer 18A is the reflecting means of the improved mirror of the invention.

In another type of improved variable reflectance mirror according to the invention, similar to that illustrated in Figure 3, the layer of laminating material is not present. Instead, the surface of the prism-shaped mirror which is not coated with a highly reflective layer is coated with an electrically conducting layer, to function as an electrode of the device of reversibly variable transmittance, and the prism-shaped mirror, with electrode layer, replaces wall 130 as one wall of said device.

In still another type of improved, variable reflectance mirror according to the invention, which is illustrated by mirror 400 of Figure 4, the reflecting means is a layer, 20, of highly reflective material, such as silver, adhered, by any standard technique in the mirror-fabricating art, to surface 131 of the device of reversibly variable transmittance so that a high fraction, preferably at least about 70%, of the light passing through the device of reversibly variable transmittance that reaches the reflective material is reflected back through surface 131. Further, in the type of improved mirror illustrated by mirror 400 of Figure 4, the surface, illustrated by 101, of the device of reversibly variable transmittance, that is parallel to and spaced-apart from surface 131, is laminated through a transparent laminating material, indicated by layer 21, to a prism-shaped piece, 2, of transparent solid material, such as glass or clear plastic, one surface, 221, of which is the front surface of the improved mirror through which light reflected by reflecting means 20 enters and leaves the mirror. The highly reflecting layer 20 and prism-shaped piece 22 cover at least the entire cross-sectional area, illustrated by 14 in Figure 2 but not shown in the cross-sectional view of Figure 4, of reversibly variable transmittance of the device of reversibly variable transmittance of the improved mirror.

In yet another type of improved variable reflectance mirror according to the invention, similar to that illustrated in Figure 4, the layer of laminating material is not present and electrode-bearing wall 100 is replaced with the prism-shaped piece of material on one surface of which is coated a layer of electrically conducting layer to serve as an electrode of the device of reversibly variable transmittance.

In the improved mirrors of the invention, the angle between the plane of the reflecting means or layer (e.g., layer 18A in Figure 3 and layer 20 in Figure 4) and the front surface (e.g., surface 101 in Figure 3 and surface 221 in Figure 4) is preferably about 1° to about 5°.

The laminating material, of layer 19 of mirror 300 of Figure 3 and layer 21 of mirror 400 of Figure 4, can be any transparent laminating material known in the art. Further, the process of laminating prism-shaped mirror 180 to surface 131 in mirror 300 or prism-shaped solid piece 22 to surface 101, is by any laminating process known in the art. In a preferred improved mirror of the invention, such as mirror 300, characterized by having the reflecting means be the reflecting means of a prism-shaped mirror, surface 131 will be of a piece of glass, solid material element 18 of the

prism-shaped mirror will be made of glass and the transparent laminating material will be polyvinyl butyral (PVB). Similarly, in a preferred improved mirror of the invention, such as mirror 400, characterized by having the reflecting means adhered directly to one surface of the device of reversibly variable transmittance and having a prism-shaped piece of solid-material laminated to the surface of the device of reversibly variable transmittance, which is parallel to and spaced-apart from the surface to which the reflecting means is adhered, surface element 101 will be of a piece of glass, the prism-shaped piece of material will be made of glass, and the transparent laminating material will be PVB.

In Figures 3 and 4, wall 100, and elements 10 and 10A thereof; wall 130, and elements 13 and 13A thereof; space 11; solution space 12; and wire or strip 16 correspond to the same-numbered elements of device 200 illustrated in Figure 2. Wire or strip 15 in Figures 3 and 4 extends to a lead or extension which corresponds to lead 15A shown in FIGURE 2.

A mirror of the invention is usually mounted in a frame which shields from view all of the device of reversibly variable transmittance except most of the cross-sectional area (indicated by 14 in device 200 of Figure 2) of reversibly varied transmittance through which light reflected by the reflectance means of the mirror and seen by the observer of the mirror passes before and after reflecting from the reflecting means. The orientation of the frame can be manually or automatically adjustable. The leads 15A and 16A (illustrated in Figure 2) of the device will be connected to power supply control elements (e.g., switching means, means for controlling potential difference between the electrodes), which may optionally be located in the frame structure behind the device and the reflecting means or can be completely separate from the frame and mounting, and which, in turn, are connected to a power supply, such as a battery. Said power supply, particularly if small batteries, can also be located in the frame structure; usually, however, the power supply (e.g., an automobile battery) will be located outside the frame. The preferred application of the variable reflectance mirrors of the invention is as anti-glare rearview mirrors for automobiles.

When employed as the variable transmittance component of a variable transmittance light filter, particularly a window, a device of the invention will be framed essentially like a pane of glass in an ordinary window or windshield. All of the device, other than the portion thereof corresponding to most of the cross-sectional area (indicated by 14 in the device 200 of Figure 2), of reversibly varied transmittance, will be hidden from view by window frame components. Similarly wires from leads, 15A and 16A of the device (illustrated in Figure 2) will be run inside such frame components, out of the view through the window, to power supply means and power supply control elements outside the window structure.

Display devices can be made with either or both of variable reflectance mirrors and variable reflectance light filters of the invention, wherein devices according to the invention are the variable transmittance components, and which, through variation in reflectance or transmittance, convey information. The area of the device of the invention that transmits or reflects light with variable intensity can be made to have the shape of desired symbols for a display device. Alternatively, separate devices of the invention can be arranged in suitable arrays to have the shape of desired symbols. In one embodiment, as the transmittance of the device or devices is decreased, the symbol represented becomes apparent to the viewer, as the device forms the dark symbol on a light background. In another embodiment, if the symbol is apparent at high transmittance of the device, because the symbol is surrounded by a dark background, activation of the device or devices will decrease transmittance and cause the symbol to fade from view. Virtually any symbol can be displayed with a display device employing a device of the invention as variable transmittance component, including letters, numerals, words, numbers or various designs. Display devices employing the variable transmittance devices according to the invention are also useful in artistic displays, such as stained glass windows with panes of reversibly variable color.

The invention is illustrated in more detail in the following examples.

Unless specified otherwise, all concentrations cited in the examples are at room temperature (20°-27°C) and all temperatures are in degrees Celsius.

EXAMPLE I

A cell was formed by two sheets of glass 7.6 cm × 12.7 cm in area and separated by 0.20 cm thick strips of Nylon monofilament. The sheets of glass had been coated on one side with transparent conductive electrodes of indium-doped tin oxide (ITO), and these sides were placed so as to face each other on the inside of the cell. As illustrated in FIG. 2, the sheets were slightly offset from one another to provide two parallel, narrow, overhanging strips of ITO coating, along the 12.7 cm side of each of the sheets, on opposite sides of the volume for solution. Contacts were made by adhering, with conductive silver epoxy, copper strips along the narrow, overhanging strips of ITO coating and then the edges of the cell were sealed with insulating epoxy. Prior to final sealing, the space between the electrodes was filled with a propylene carbonate solution of 0.05 M N,N,N',N'-tetramethyl-1,4-phenylenediamine, 0.05 M 1,1'-diheptyl-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate and 0.5 M tetra-n-butylammonium fluoroborate.

When 1.0 volts was applied between the electrodes, the solution, which initially appeared colorless, changed to a deep blue-purple color. The solution returned to its bleached, colorless state when the cell was open-circuited or when

EP 0 240 226 B1

the cell was short-circuited. The cell returned to its bleached state more rapidly when the polarity of the 1.0 volt potential between the electrodes was reversed for several seconds and then the cell was short-circuited.

When the surface (opposite the ITO-coated surface) of one of the glass sheets was silvered, the device, when viewed through the unsilvered glass side, became a variable reflectance mirror.

5

EXAMPLE II

A cell that acted as a variable reflectance mirror was formed by two sheets of glass 10.2 cm × 10.2 cm in area and spaced by 0.013 cm thick beads of glass. One side of one of the glass sheets was coated with ITO and one side of the other sheet of glass was coated with a vacuum-deposited layer of Inconel metal. The cell was assembled with the ITO and Inconel electrode layers facing each other on the inside of the cell. The copper-strip contacts to the electrode surfaces, sealing and configuration of the device were the same as for the cell in Example I. The space between the electrodes was filled with a solution of 0.02 M 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine, 0.02 M tetramethylene bis[4 (1-benzylpyridine-4'-yl)-pyridinium]tetrafluoroborate, and 0.1 M tetra-n-butylammonium fluoroborate in propylene carbonate.

10

The reflectance from the Inconel electrode rapidly decreased when a potential of 1.0 volts was applied between the ITO and Inconel electrodes. The applied potential caused the solution layer to turn deep blue-green. Removal of the applied potential caused the solution to return to its clear, zero-potential equilibrium condition and the reflectance from the Inconel electrode to increase to the original high level, prior to application of the potential difference.

15

EXAMPLE III

A device that acted as a variable transmittance light-filter or window was fabricated by spacing two sheets of glass, coated on one side with ITO, 0.013 cm apart, using glass beads for spacing. The dimensions of the sheets of glass were 6.4 cm × 25.4 cm. The ITO-coated sides of the sheets were facing. The copper-strip contacts, sealing and configuration of the device were the same as in the device of Example I, with the strips along the 25.4 cm sides of the sheets. The space between the electrodes was filled with a solution of 0.05 M 1,1'-dibenzyl-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate and 0.05 M 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine in propylene carbonate.

20

Application of a potential of 1.1 volts between the electrodes, across the solution layer, caused the white light transmittance of the device to decrease from 81.5% to 10.0% in 11 seconds. The steady-state transmittance of the device with 1.1 volts applied was 6.0%. The transmittance of the device, upon short-circuiting the electrodes, increased from 10% back to 70% in a period of 7 seconds and the transmittance increased back to 81.5% within 16 seconds after the electrodes were shorted. The device was cycled 40,000 times at room temperature between its transmittance at zero-applied potential and its steady-state transmittance with 1.1 volts applied between the electrodes. After the 40,000 cycles, the transmittance of the device at zero-applied potential was 78.5% and the steady-state transmittance at 1.1 volts applied potential remained at 6.0%. The speed of changes in transmittance was unchanged by the cycling.

25

When the device was cycled 20,000 additional times at 55°C, between transmittance at zero applied potential and steady-state transmittance at 1.1 volts, the transmittance at zero-applied potential decreased to 71.5% while that at 1.1 volts remained at 6.0%.

30

EXAMPLE IV

A device that acted as a variable transmittance light filter or window was fabricated like the device of Example III, except that the space between the electrodes was filled with a solution of 0.04 M 1,1'-di(n-heptyl)-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate, 0.04 M 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine and 0.1 M tetra-n-butylammonium fluoroborate in propylene carbonate.

35

Application of a potential of 1.1 volts between the electrodes, across the solution layer, caused the white light transmittance of the device to decrease from 84.5% to 20.0% in a period of 10 seconds. The steady-state transmittance of the device with 1.1 volts applied was 11.0%. The transmittance of the device, upon short-circuiting the electrodes, increased from 20% back to 70% in a period of 7 seconds and the transmittance increased back to 84.5% within 22 seconds after the electrodes were shorted. The device was cycled 40,000 times at room temperature between its transmittance at zero-applied potential and its steady-state transmittance with 1.1 volts applied between the electrodes. After the 40,000 cycles, the zero-applied potential transmittance was 84.0% and the transmittance at 1.1 volts applied potential was 11.0%. The speed of changes in transmittance was unchanged by the cycling.

40

When the device was cycled 20,000 additional times at 55°C, between transmittance at zero-applied potential and steady-state transmittance at 1.1 volts, the transmittance at zero-applied potential decreased to 77.5% while that at 1.1 volts remained at 11.0%.

EXAMPLE V

5 A device that acted as a variable transmittance light filter or window was fabricated like the device of Example III, except that the dimensions of the sheets of ITO-coated glass were 6.4 cm × 7.6 cm. The solution between the electrodes was 0.05 M in 1,1'-dibenzyl-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate and 0.05 M in 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine in propylene carbonate.

10 Application of a potential of 1.1 volts between the electrodes, across the solution layer, caused the white light transmittance of the device to decrease from 81.5% to 10.0% in a period of 10 seconds. The steady-state transmittance of the device with 1.1. volts applied was 11.0%. The transmittance of the device, upon short-circuiting the electrodes, increased from 20% back to 70% in a period of 6 seconds and the transmittance increased back to 81.5% within 15 seconds after the electrodes were shortened. The device was cycled 40,000 times at 55°C between its transmittance at zero-applied potential and its steady-state transmittance with 1.1 volts applied between the electrodes. After the 40,000 cycles, the zero-applied potential transmittance was 65.0% and the steady-state transmittance at 1.1 volts applied potential remained at 6.0%. The speed of changes in transmittance was unchanged by the cycling.

15 EXAMPLE VI

20 A devices that acted as a variable transmittance light filter or window was fabricated like the device of Example III, except that the space between the electrodes was filled with a solution of 0.01 M N,N,N',N'-tetramethyl-1,4-phenylenediamine, 0.01 M 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine, 0.01 M 1,1'-dibenzyl-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate, 0.01 M tetramethylene bis[4(1-benzylpyridene-4'-yl)-pyridinium]tetrafluoroborate, and 0.1 M tetra-n-butyl ammonium fluoroborate in propylene carbonate.

25 Application of a potential of 1.2 volts between the electrodes, across the solution layer, caused the white light transmittance of the device to decrease from 84% to 10% in a period of four seconds. Steady-state transmittance with 1.2 volts was 5%. Upon short circuiting of the electrodes, the transmittance of the device increased from 10% to 70% in a period of 6.5 seconds and increased back to the zero-potential equilibrium value of 84% within 15 seconds after the electrodes were shorted.

EXAMPLE VII

30 Devices, fabricated in essentially the same way as the device illustrated in Example III and filled with propylene carbonate solutions of the electrochromic compound combinations indicated below in Table VII, were found to operate as self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic devices, similarly to those illustrated in Examples I to VI.

35

40

45

50

55

TABLE VII

ANODIC ELECTROCHROMIC COMPOUND	CATHODIC ELECTROCHROMIC COMPOUND
1. 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine	1,1'-di(n-heptyl)-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate
2. 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine	1,1'-di(n-heptyl)-4,4'-bipyridinium diperchlorate
3. 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine	1,1'-diphenyl-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate
4. 10-methylphenoxyazine	1,1'-di(n-heptyl)-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate
5. 10-ethylphenoxyazine	1,1'-dibenzyl-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate
6. tetrathiafulvalene	

EXAMPLE VIII

Numerous compounds have been tested for acceptability as anodic or cathodic electrochromic compounds in the single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase devices of the invention, with propylene carbonate as solvent.

EP 0 240 226 B1

Some compounds were found to be unacceptable because of instability upon reduction (cathodic compounds) or oxidation (anodic compounds). Such instability is indicated by the absence of any, or the presence of only one, chemically reversible reduction wave (in the case of a cathodic compound) or chemically reversible oxidation wave (in the case of an anodic compound) in a voltammogram, obtained by any standard technique, of the compound in the solvent at room temperature.

No compound, which has at least two chemically reversible voltammetric reduction waves (if a cathodic compound) or at least two chemically reversible voltammetric oxidation waves (if an anodic compound) in a solvent, has been found to lead to unacceptable instability, particularly to cycling, when combined, in a solution in the solvent, with any other compound or compounds with the same property. This observation applies particularly to such combinations which include at least one cathodic compound and at least one anodic compound.

Clearly, to be acceptable, a compound must, upon reduction or oxidation in the solvent, undergo a change in extinction coefficient at at least one wavelength in the visible range (4200Å to 700Å). To insure stability, such a change must occur with the reduction corresponding to the first, of at least two, chemically reversible voltammetric reduction waves, if the compound is a cathodic compound, or the oxidation corresponding to the first, of at least two, chemically reversible voltammetric oxidation waves, if the compound is an anodic compound.

Beyond being minimally acceptable as a cathodic or anodic electrochromic compound in a solution of the invention, a compound will desirably have a solubility, in its zero-potential equilibrium state in the solvent of such a solution, of at least about 10⁻⁴M at 25°C and will undergo, at at least one wavelength in the visible range, upon the reduction corresponding to the first chemically reversible voltammetric reduction wave, if a cathodic compound, or the oxidation corresponding to the first chemically reversible voltammetric oxidation wave, if an anodic compound, an increase in extinction coefficient by at least a factor of about 10² to at least about 10³ cm⁻¹ M⁻¹.

Compounds that have been found to meet these criteria of acceptability and desirability, with propylene carbonate as solvent, are all of those specifically mentioned in any of Examples I to VII, and, in addition, the novel anodic compound, N,N'-N''-trimethyltriphenazinoxazine, the known anodic compounds, o-tolidine, N,N,N',N'-tetramethylbenzidine, N,N,N',N'-tetraphenyl-1,4-phenylene diamine, and 5,10-dihydro-5,10-diphenylphenazine and the known cathodic compounds 1,1'-dimethyl-4,4'-bipyridinium dichloride, 1,1'-di(p-cyano phenyl)-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate, and 1,1'-diphenyl-4,4'-bipyridinium diiodide.

EXAMPLE IX

This example illustrates that devices of the invention are useful as gray-scale devices, i.e., devices in which, by adjusting potential difference between the electrodes, transmittance can be adjusted to, and stabilized at, intermediate values between the "clear" (i.e., zero-potential equilibrium) value and the darkest value that is possible to attain without impairing chemical stability.

A cell like that of Example III was constructed and filled with a solution which was 0.04 M in 1,1'-di(n-heptyl)-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate and 0.04 M in 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine in propylene carbonate. The steady-state transmittance of the cell to white light was measured as a function of the potential difference between the electrodes of the device, and the values indicated in Table IX were obtained.

TABLE IX

Potential between the Electrodes (volts)	Steady-State Transmittance (%)
0.0	83
0.1	83
0.2	83
0.3	83
0.4	81.5
0.5	71.5
0.6	56.0
0.7	42.0
0.8	31.0
0.9	24.0
1.0	17.0
1.1	13.0
1.2	11.5

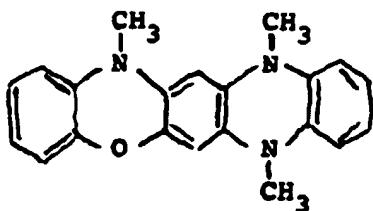
EXAMPLE X

A device that acted as a variable reflectance mirror with a thickened solution was fabricated by coating the ITO surface of an ITO-coated piece of glass with a dichloroethane solution of the acrylic sheet material, LUCITE L. Upon evaporation of the dichloroethane, a thin film of acrylic sheet material weighing 0.29 grams was left on the ITO surface. This same piece of glass had a conventional-mirror, silvered coating on the side opposite the ITO-acrylic material side and was used to prepare a cell by spacing the ITO-acrylic side 0.013 cm from the ITO side of a second piece of glass which had only an ITO coating on one side. Spacing was with glass beads. The dimensions of the sheets of glass were 6.4 cm \times 25.4 cm. The copper-strip contacts, sealing and configuration of the device were the same as that in Example III. The space between the ITO-acrylic side of the one piece of glass and the ITO side of the other piece of glass was filled with a solution of 0.04 M 1,1'-di-n-heptyl-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate, 0.04 M 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine and 0.1 M tetrabutylammonium fluoroborate in propylene carbonate.

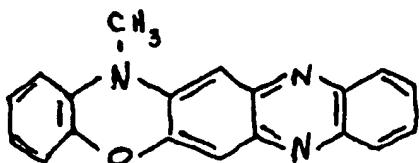
Within several hours at room temperature, the acrylic layer had dissolved in the propylene carbonate solution, resulting in thickening, and the device could be operated as a variable reflectance mirror by varying the potential across the solution between the ITO electrode layers. With an applied voltage of 1.2 volts, the reflectance changed from 73.5% to 20.0% in a period of 2.5 seconds and reached a steady state reflectance of 9.0%. Upon short circuiting the electrodes, the reflectance increased from 9.0% to 60.0% in a period of 17 seconds and eventually increased back to the clear, zero-potential value of 73.5%.

EXAMPLE XI

Synthesis of N,N',N"-trimethyltriphenazinoxazine



The compound was made, starting with the known compound, N-methyltriphenazinoxazine, of Formula



by following the procedure described by Gilman and Dietrich, J. Amer. Chem. Soc. 79, 6178 (1957), for converting phenazine to 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine. 100 milligrams of the starting compound (0.33 mmoles), 25 milligrams of potassium metal (0.67 mmoles) and 5 ml of ethylene glycol dimethyl ether were stirred for 12 hours. Then an excess of methyl iodide was added, followed by absolute ethanol to destroy excess potassium.

The reaction mixture was then mixed with water. The resulting precipitate was recrystallized from ethanol to yield approximately 2 milligrams of pure product.

In propylene carbonate, the product was found to have chemically reversible oxidation waves and color changes very similar to those of 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine.

EXAMPLE XII

A device with the configuration illustrated in FIG. 3 was fabricated by laminating, using a standard procedure with the clear laminating material polyvinylbutyral (PVB), an electrochromic device like that in Example III to a conventional, prism-shaped, automobile rearview mirror. The device was filled with a solution of 0.02 M 1,1'-dibenzyl-4,4'-bipyridinium

difluoroborate, 0.02 M 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine, and 0.1 M tetra-n-butylammonium fluoroborate in propylene carbonate. This device was used as the rearview mirror inside an automobile. During operation, the device provided a distortion-free, continuously variable reflectance (i.e., gray-scale) mirror which was extremely effective in eliminating glare due to headlights on vehicles approaching from behind during night driving.

5 The device was operated at zero-potential difference when there was little or no glare from headlights of vehicles approaching from behind, 0.6 volts potential difference when there was moderate glare, and 1.0 volts when there was high glare.

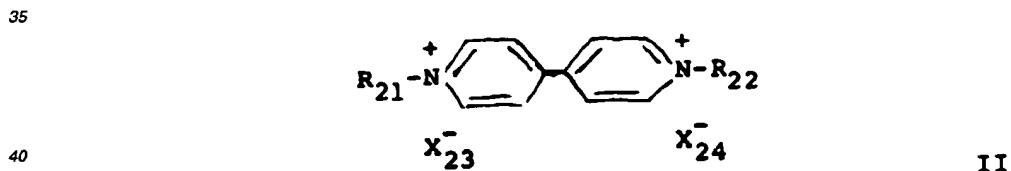
The clear state reflectance from the silvered surface of the prism mirror at zero applied potential was greater than 70% of the light incident on the device. The steady state of reflectance from the silvered surface at 0.6 volts applied 10 potential was about 30% and at 1.0 volts applied potential the reflectance was about 10%.

Claims

- 15 1. A solution, for use as the medium of variable transmittance of a single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic device, which solution comprises a solvent, at least one cathodic electrochromic compound and at least one anodic electrochromic compound, and if all cathodic and anodic compounds in their zero-potential equilibrium states in the solution are not ionic, an inert current-carrying electrolyte, characterised in that the at least one cathodic electrochromic compound, in a voltammogram done in the solvent at room temperature, displays at least two chemically reversible reduction waves, with the first of said reductions accompanied by an increase in molar extinction coefficient at at least one wavelength in the visible range; and the at least one anodic electrochromic compound, in a voltammogram done in the solvent at room temperature, displays at least two chemically reversible oxidation waves, with the first of said oxidations accompanied by an increase in molar extinction coefficient at at least one wavelength in the visible range.
- 20 2. A solution according to Claim 1 wherein:

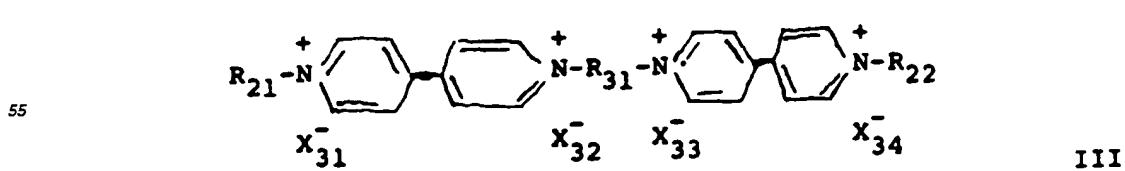
- 30 (A) the solvent is liquid at room temperature and selected from propylene carbonate, gamma-butyrolactone, gamma-valerolactone, and any homogeneous mixture that is liquid at room temperature of any two or more of said solvents or any one or more of said solvents with ethylene carbonate;
- (B) the cathodic compounds are selected from

- (i) compounds of Formula II



45 wherein R₂₁ and R₂₂ are the same or different and are each selected from alkyl of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, phenyl optionally substituted at any one position with chloride, bromide, iodide, cyano, or an alkyl group of 1 to 4 carbon atoms, and benzyl, wherein the phenyl group is optionally substituted at any one position with chloride, bromide, iodide, cyano, or an alkyl group of 1 to 4 carbon atoms; and wherein X₂₃⁻ and X₂₄⁻ are the same or different and are each selected from chloride, bromide, iodide, BF₄⁻, PF₆⁻, AsF₆⁻, ClO₄⁻ and NO₃⁻; and

- 50 (ii) compounds of Formula III



EP 0 240 226 B1

wherein R₂₁ and R₂₂ are the same or different and are defined as above for the compound of Formula II, R₃₁ is alkylene of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, and X₃₁⁻, X₃₂⁻, X₃₃⁻ and X₃₄⁻ are the same or different and each selected from chloride, bromide, iodide, BF₄⁻, PF₆⁻, AsF₆⁻, ClO₄⁻ and NO₃⁻.

5 (C) the anodic compounds are selected from

(i) compounds of Formula IV

10



IV

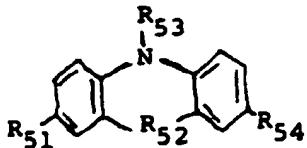
15

wherein R₄₁, R₄₂, R₄₃ and R₄₄ are the same or different and are each selected from hydrogen, alkyl of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, phenyl optionally substituted at any one position with chloride, bromide, iodide, cyano, or an alkyl group of 1 to 4 carbon atoms, and benzyl, wherein the phenyl moiety is optionally substituted at any one position with chloride, bromide, iodide, cyano, or an alkyl group of 1 to 4 carbon atoms;

20

(ii) compounds of Formula V

25



V

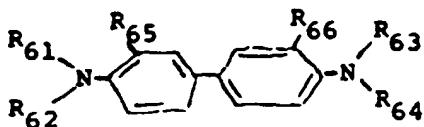
30

wherein R₅₁ and R₅₄ are the same or different and are each selected from hydrogen and dialkylamino, wherein the alkyl groups are the same or different and are each of 1 to 6 carbon atoms; R₅₂ is oxygen, sulfur or NR₅₅, wherein R₅₅ is the same as or different from R₅₃ and both R₅₅ and R₅₃ are selected from hydrogen, alkyl of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, phenyl optionally substituted at any one position with chloride, bromide, iodide, cyano, or alkyl of 1 to 4 carbon atoms, or benzyl, optionally substituted at any one position of the phenyl group with chloride, bromide, iodide, cyano, or alkyl of 1 to 4 carbon atoms;

35

(iii) compounds of Formula VI

40



VI

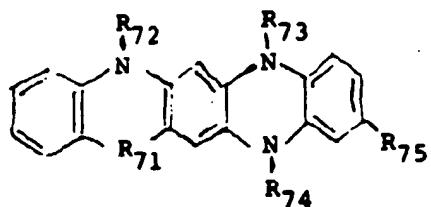
45

wherein R₆₁, R₆₂, R₆₃ and R₆₄ are the same or different and are each selected from alkyl of 1 to 10 carbon atoms or phenyl; and R₆₅ and R₆₆ are the same or different and are each selected from hydrogen or alkyl of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, provided that both R₆₅ and R₆₆ are hydrogen or both are alkyl, and if R₆₅ and R₆₆ are both hydrogen, not more than one of R₆₁ and R₆₂ is hydrogen and not more than one of R₆₃ and R₆₄ is hydrogen;

50

(iv) compounds of Formula VII

55



10 wherein R₇₁ is oxygen or sulfur, R₇₅ is hydrogen or dialkylamino, wherein the alkyl groups are the same or different and are each selected from alkyl of 1 to 6 carbon atoms, and R₇₂, R₇₃ and R₇₄ are the same or different and are each selected from hydrogen, alkyl of 1 to 6 carbon atoms, phenyl, optionally substituted at any one position with an alkyl group of 1 to 6 carbon atoms, and benzyl, optionally substituted at any one position of the phenyl group with an alkyl group of 1 to 6 carbon atoms; and
15 (v) the compound of Formula VIII



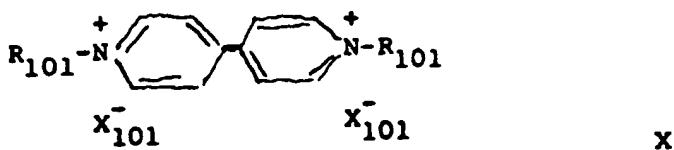
3. A solution according to Claim 2 wherein:

25 (A) the solvent is propylene carbonate;
 (B) the solution includes inert, current-carrying electrolyte, at a concentration of 0.01 M to 1.0 M in the solution at 25°C, selected from an alkali metal salt of Formula M₃₁⁺X₃₅⁻, a tetraalkylammonium salt of Formula M₃₂⁺X₃₅⁻, aluminum chloride, aluminum bromide and any combination of the foregoing salts, wherein M₃₁⁺ is potassium, sodium or lithium, M₃₂⁺ is tetraalkylammonium wherein the alkyl groups are the same or different and are each selected from alkyl of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, and X₃₅⁻ is chloride, bromide, BF₄⁻, PF₆⁻, AsF₆⁻, ClO₄⁻ or NO₃⁻;
 30 (C) the solution includes one or two different cations of cathodic compounds, each at a concentration of 0.01 M to 0.1 M in the solution at 25°C at zero-potential equilibrium, and
 (D) the solution includes one or two different anodic compounds, each at a concentration of 0.01 M to 0.1 M
 35 in the solution at 25°C at zero-potential equilibrium.

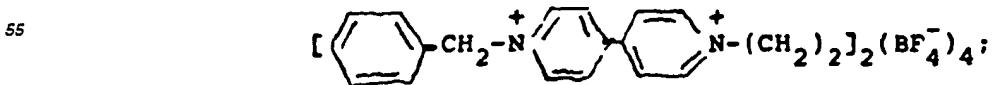
4. A solution according to Claim 3 that is thickened with 5% (w/w) to 25% (w/w) of acrylic sheet material.

5. A solution according to Claim 3 wherein:

40 (A) the cathodic compounds are selected from compounds of Formula X

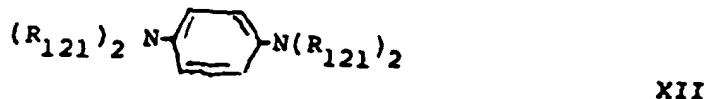


50 wherein R₁₀₁ is n-heptyl, phenyl or benzyl and X₁₀₁ is BF₄⁻ or ClO₄⁻; and the compound of formula



EP 0 240 226 B1

(B) the anodic compounds are selected from the compounds of Formula XII



10 wherein R₁₂₁ is methyl or phenyl; and the compounds of Formula XIII



20 wherein R₁₃₂ is oxygen, sulfur or NR₁₃₃, wherein R₁₃₃ is methyl or phenyl, and R₁₃₁ is

- 25 (i) methyl or ethyl, if R₁₃₂ is oxygen or sulfur,
(ii) methyl, if R₁₃₂ is N(CH₃), or
(iii) phenyl, if R₁₃₂ is N(C₆H₅);

and the compound of Formula VIII



35 and

(C) the inert, current-carrying electrolyte is a compound of Formula M₄₂⁺(BF₄⁻), wherein M₄₂⁺ is tetra-n-alkylammonium, wherein the n-alkyl groups are the same and are of 1 to 6 carbon atoms.

- 40 6. A solution according to Claim 5 wherein the inert current-carrying electrolyte is tetra-n-butylammonium fluoroborate at a concentration of 0.05 M to 0.5 M at 25°C, the cathodic compounds are selected from 1,1'-dibenzyl-4,4'-bipyridinium difluoroborate and tetramethylene bis[4(1-benzylpyridine-4'-yl)pyridinium]tetrafluoroborate, the anodic compounds are selected from 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine and N,N,N',N'-tetramethyl-1,4-phenylenediamine, the total concentration of the cathodic compounds is 0.01 M to 0.05 M at 25°C, and the total concentration of the anodic compounds is 0.01 M to 0.05 M at 25°C.
- 45 7. A single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic device characterised in that it comprises, as the medium of reversibly variable transmittance to light, a solution as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 6.
- 50 8. A variable reflectance mirror characterised in that it comprises a single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic device as claimed in Claim 7.
- 55 9. A mirror according to Claim 8 wherein, in the electrochromic device, the solution of reversibly variable transmittance is between and in contact with two planar, parallel, spaced-apart walls (100, 130), at least one of which is transparent and each of which, on the side in contact with said solution, is coated with an electrode layer of electrically conductive material, (10A, 13A), provided that, if one of said walls is not transparent, it comprises a reflecting layer of high reflectance material (18A, 20) which reflects through said solution and the transparent wall light which reaches said reflecting layer after entering the solution through the transparent wall.

10. A mirror according to Claim 9 characterised in that

(A) both electrode-bearing walls (100, 130) of the electrochromic device are glass with an electrode layer, (10A, 13A), of indium-doped tin oxide in contact with the solution of reversibly variable transmittance, the separation of the electrode layers being 0.006 cm to 0.025 cm; and

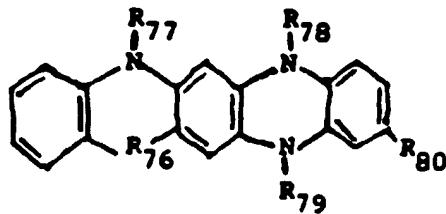
(B) (i) one of said walls (100) is transparent to light of visible wavelengths and the other of said walls (130) is coated, on the side opposite the electrode-bearing side, with a reflecting layer (20); or

(ii) both of said walls are transparent to light of visible wavelengths and the reflecting means of the mirror is the highly reflective surface of a prism-shaped mirror (180) laminated through a transparent laminating material to one of said walls, the angle between the highly reflective surface and the laminated surface of the prism-shaped mirror being 1° to 5°;

provided that, if one of the electrode-bearing walls is coated with a reflecting layer, the other of the electrode-bearing walls optionally is laminated through a transparent laminating material to a prism-shaped piece of glass (22) wherein the angle between the surface laminated to the electrode-bearing wall and the other surface, through which passes substantially all of the light reaching the electrode-bearing wall, is 1° to 5°.

11. A mirror according to Claim 10 wherein the reflecting means is the highly reflective surface of a prism-shaped mirror (180, 22) laminated to one of the electrode-bearing walls (100, 130) of the electrochromic device.

20 12. A transmittance medium of a single-compartment, self-erasing, solution-phase electrochromic device as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the anodic electrochromic compound is a compound of Formula LII



LII

35 wherein R₇₆ is oxygen or sulfur, R₈₀ is hydrogen or dialkylamino, wherein the alkyl groups are the same or different and are each of 1 to 6 carbon atoms, and R₇₇, R₇₈ and R₇₉ are the same or different and are each selected from hydrogen, alkyl of 1 to 6 carbon atoms, phenyl optionally substituted at any one position with an alkyl group of 1 to 6 carbon atoms, and benzyl, optionally substituted at any one position of the phenyl group with an alkyl group of 1 to 6 carbon atoms.

40 13. The variable transmittance medium of Claim 12, wherein the anodic compound LII has the group R₇₆ as oxygen, R₈₀ as hydrogen, and R₇₇, R₇₈ and R₇₉ as methyl.

45 14. A solution according to Claim 2 wherein the solvent is propylene carbonate; the cation of the cathodic compound is 1,1'-dimethyl-4,4'-bipyridinium at a concentration of 0.01 M to 0.1 M in the solution at 25°C at zero-potential equilibrium; and the anodic compound is 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine at a concentration of 0.01 M to 0.1 M in the solution at 25°C at zero-potential equilibrium.

50 15. A solution according to Claim 14 that is thickened with 3% (w/w) to 30% (w/w) of acrylic sheet material.

55 16. A mirror according to Claim 8 which is a rearview mirror for an automobile and wherein the component of reversibly variable transmittance provides continuously variable reflectance and is gray-scale controllable.

17. A mirror according to Claim 16 wherein, in the electrochromic device, the solution of reversibly variable transmittance is between and in contact with two planar, parallel, spaced-apart walls (100, 130), at least one of which is transparent and each of which, on the side in contact with said solution, is coated with an electrode layer (10A, 13A) of electrically conductive material, provided that, if one of said walls is not transparent, it comprises a reflecting layer (18A, 20) of high reflectance material which reflects, through said solution and the transparent wall, light

which reaches said reflecting layer after entering the solution through the transparent wall.

5 18. A mirror according to Claim 17 wherein, in the electrochromic device, the solution of reversibly variable transmittance is held in a space defined by said two planar, parallel, spaced-apart walls (100, 130), and a periphery (11) defined by an epoxy seal in which are embedded glass beads, which are in contact with the sides of said walls, which are in contact with said solution, and which hold apart said walls.

10 19. A mirror according to Claim 17 or 18 wherein the separation between the electrode layers is between 0.0025 and 0.05 cm.

15 20. A mirror according to any one of Claims 17 to 19 wherein the sheet resistance of a transparent electrode layer (10A, 13A) is less than 40 ohms per square.

20 21. A mirror according to any one of Claims 16 to 20 wherein, in the electrochromic device, the solution of reversibly variable transmittance comprises:

- (A) a non-aqueous solvent;
- (B) a cathodic electrochromic compound;
- (C) 5,10-dihydro-5,10-dimethylphenazine; and
- (D) if all cathodic compounds in their zero-potential equilibrium states are not ionic, an inert, current-carrying electrolyte.

25 22. A mirror according to any one of Claims 16 to 21 wherein, in the electrochromic device, the solution of reversibly variable transmittance comprises a viologen salt.

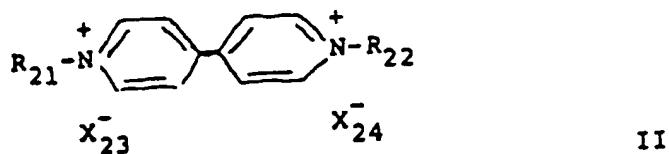
25 23. A mirror according to Claims 21 or 22 wherein the solvent is propylene carbonate.

Patentansprüche

30 1. Lösung zur Verwendung als Medium mit variabler Transmittanz einer selbstlöschenden Einkammer-Lösungsspann-Elektrochormievorrichtung, wobei die Lösung aufweist ein Lösungsmittel, mindestens eine kathodische elektrochromische Verbindung und mindestens eine anode elektrochromische Verbindung sowie, falls alle kathodischen und anodischen Verbindungen in ihrem Nullpotential-Gleichgewichtszuständen in der Lösung nichtionisch sind, einen inerten stromführenden Elektrolyten,
dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die mindestens eine kathodische elektrochromische Verbindung in einer im Lösungsmittel bei Raumtemperatur aufgenommenen Strom-Spannungskurve (Voltammogramm) mindestens zwei chemisch reversible Reduktionswellen aufweist, wobei die erste dieser Reduktionen von einer Zunahme des molaren Extinktionskoeffizienten bei mindestens einer Wellenlänge im sichtbaren Bereich begleitet ist; und daß die mindestens eine anodische elektrochromische Verbindung in einer im Lösungsmittel bei Raumtemperatur aufgenommenen Strom-Spannungskurve (Voltammogramm) mindestens zwei chemisch reversible Oxidationswellen aufweist, wobei die erste dieser Oxydationen von einer Zunahme des molaren Extinktionskoeffizienten bei mindestens einer Wellenlänge im sichtbaren Bereich begleitet ist.

40 2. Lösung nach Anspruch 1,
bei der:

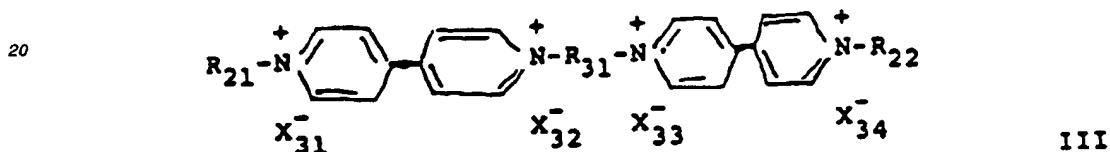
- A) das Lösungsmittel bei Raumtemperatur flüssig ist und ausgewählt ist aus Propylenkarbonat, Gamma-Butyrolacton, Gamma-Valerolakton und einer beliebigen, bei Raumtemperatur flüssigen homogenen Mischung von zwei oder mehr dieser Lösungsmittel oder von einem oder mehreren dieser Lösungsmittel mit Ethylenkarbonat.
- B) die kathodischen Verbindungen ausgewählt sind aus i) Verbindungen der Formel II



10 wobei R₂₁ und R₂₂ gleich oder verschieden sind und jeweils ausgewählt sind aus Alkyl mit 1 bis 10 Kohlenstoffatomen, Phenyl, das wahlweise an einer beliebigen Position mit Chlorid, Bromid, Jodid, Cyano oder einer Alkylgruppe mit 1 bis 4 Kohlenstoffatomen substituiert sein kann, und Benzyl, in dem die Phenylgruppe wahlweise an einer beliebigen Position mit Chlorid, Bromid, Jodid, Cyano oder einer Alkylgruppe mit 1 bis 4 Kohlenstoffatomen substituiert ist;

15 und wobei X₂₃⁻ und X₂₄⁻ gleich oder verschieden und jeweils aus Chlorid, Bromid, Jodid, BF₄⁻, PF₆⁻, AsF₆⁻, ClO₄⁻ und NO₃⁻ ausgewählt sind; und

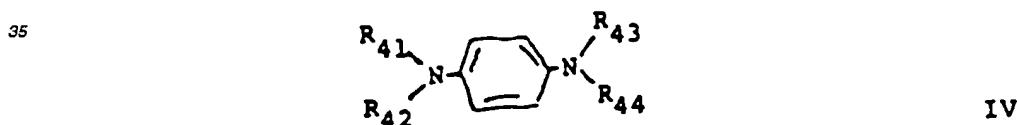
(ii) Verbindungen der Formel III



25 wobei R₂₁ und R₂₂ gleich oder verschieden sind und die gleiche Definition haben wie oben für die Formel II angegeben, R₃₁ Alkylen mit 1 bis 10 Kohlenstoffatomen ist, und X₃₁⁻, X₃₂⁻ und X₃₄⁻ gleich oder verschieden sind und jeweils ausgewählt sind aus Chlorid, Bromid, Jodid, BF₄⁻, PF₆⁻, AsF₆⁻, ClO₄⁻ und NO₃⁻;

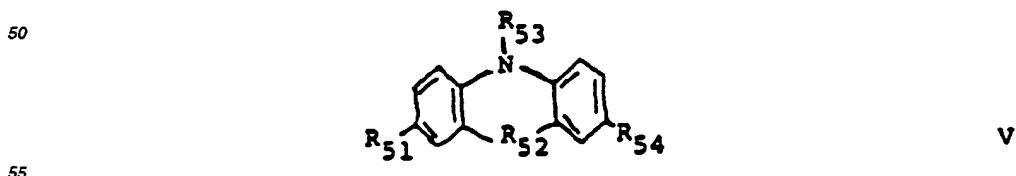
(C) Die anodischen Verbindungen ausgewählt sind aus

30 (i) Verbindungen der Formel IV



40 wobei R₄₁, R₄₂, R₄₃ und R₄₄ gleich oder verschieden sind und jeweils ausgewählt sind aus Wasserstoff, Alkyl mit 1 bis 10 Kohlenstoffatomen, Phenyl, das wahlweise an beliebiger Position mit Chlorid, Bromid, Jodid, Cyano oder einer Alkylgruppe mit 1 bis 4 Kohlenstoffatomen substituiert sein kann, und Benzyl, in dem die Phenylgruppe wahlweise an beliebiger Position mit Chlorid, Bromid, Jodid, Cyano oder einer Alkylgruppe mit 1 bis 4 Kohlenstoffatomen substituiert ist;

45 (ii) Verbindungen der Formel (V)

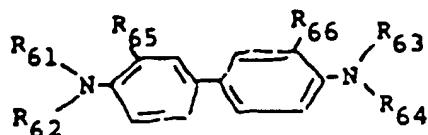


wobei R₅₁ und R₅₄ gleich oder verschieden sind und jeweils ausgewählt sind aus Wasserstoff und Dialkylamino, wobei die Alkylgruppen gleich oder verschieden sind und jeweils 1 bis 6 Kohlenstoffatome ha-

ben; R₅₂ Wasserstoff oder Schwefel oder NR₅₅ ist, wobei R₅₅ gleich oder verschieden von R₅₃ ist und sowohl R₅₅ und R₅₃ ausgewählt sind aus Wasserstoff, Alkyl mit 1 bis 10 Kohlenstoffatomen, Phenyl, das wahlweise an beliebiger Position mit Chlorid, Bromid, Iodid, Cyano oder Alkyl mit 1 bis 4 Kohlenstoffatomen substituiert ist, oder Benzyl, das wahlweise an beliebiger Position der Phenylgruppe mit Chlorid, Bromid, Jodid, Cyano oder Alkyl mit 1 bis 4 Kohlenstoffatomen substituiert ist;

5 (iii) Verbindungen der Formel VI,

10



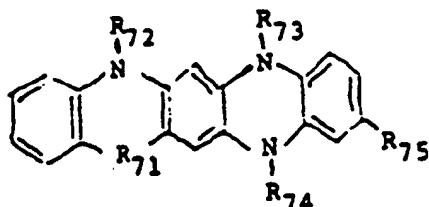
VI

15

wobei R₆₁, R₆₂, R₆₃ und R₆₄ gleich oder verschieden sind und jeweils ausgewählt sind aus Alkyl mit 1 bis 10 Kohlenstoffatomen oder Phenyl; R₆₅ und R₆₆ gleich oder verschieden sind und jeweils ausgewählt sind aus Wasserstoff oder Alkyl mit 1 bis 10 Kohlenstoffatomen, vorausgesetzt daß R₆₅ und R₆₆ beide Wasserstoff oder beide Alkyl sind, und falls R₆₅ und R₆₆ beide Wasserstoff sind, nicht mehr als eines von R₆₁ und R₆₂ Wasserstoff ist und nicht mehr als eines von R₆₃ und R₆₄ Wasserstoff ist;

20 (iv) Verbindungen der Formel VII

25



VII

30

wobei R₇₁ Sauerstoff oder Schwefel ist, R₇₅ Wasserstoff oder Dialkylamino ist, wobei die Alkylgruppen gleich oder verschieden sind und jeweils ausgewählt sind aus Alkyl mit 1 bis 6 Kohlenstoffatomen, und R₇₂, R₇₃ und R₇₄ gleich oder verschieden sind und jeweils ausgewählt sind aus Wasserstoff, Alkyl mit 1 bis 6 Kohlenstoffatomen, Phenyl, das wahlweise an beliebiger Position mit einer Alkylgruppe mit 1 bis 6 Kohlenstoffatomen substituiert ist, und Benzyl, das wahlweise an beliebiger Position der Phenylgruppe mit einer Alkylgruppe von 1 bis 6 Kohlenstoffatomen substituiert ist; und

35 (v) der Verbindung der Formel VIII

35

40



VIII

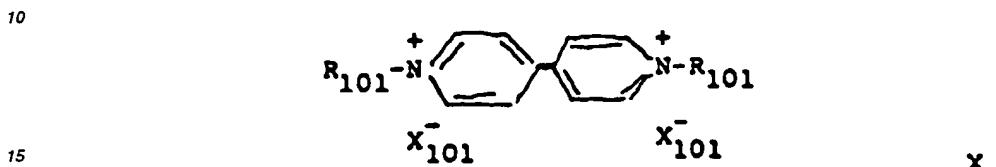
45

3. Lösung nach Anspruch 2,
bei der

- (A) das Lösungsmittel Propylenkarbonat ist;
- 50 (B) die Lösung einen inerten, stromführenden Elektrolyten in einer Konzentration von 0,01 M bis 1,0 M in der Lösung bei 25°C enthält, der ausgewählt ist aus einem Alkalimetallsalz der Formel M⁺₃₁X⁻₃₅, einem Tetraalkylammoniumsalz der Formel M⁺₃₂X⁻₃₅, Aluminiumchlorid, Aluminiumbromid und jeder Kombination der genannten Salze, wobei M⁺₃₁ Kalium, Natrium oder Lithium ist, M⁺₃₂ Tetraalkylammonium ist, wobei die Alkylgruppen gleich oder verschieden sind und jeweils ausgewählt sind aus Alkyl mit 1 bis 10 Kohlenstoffatomen, und X⁻₅ Chlorid, Bromid, BF⁻₄, PF⁻₆, ASF⁻₆, ClO⁻₄ oder NO⁻₃ ist;
- 55 (C) die Lösung ein oder zwei unterschiedliche Kationen von kathodischen Verbindungen enthält, jede in einer Konzentration von 0,01 M bis 0,1 M in der Lösung bei 25°C bei Nullpotential-Gleichgewicht, und
- (D) die Lösung ein oder zwei verschiedene anodische Verbindungen enthält, jede bei einer Konzentration von 0,01 M bis 0,1 M in der Lösung bei 25°C bei Nullpotential-Gleichgewicht.

4. Lösung nach Anspruch 3,
die mit 5% (Gew.) bis 25% (Gew.) von Acrylglasmaterial eingedickt ist.
5. Lösung nach Anspruch 3,
bei der

(A) die kathodischen Verbindungen ausgewählt sind aus Verbindungen der Formel X



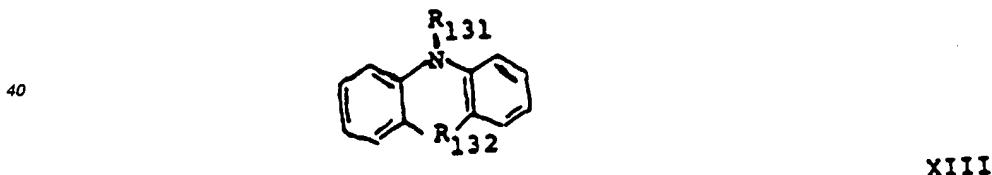
20 wobei R₁₀₁ n-Heptyl, Phenyl oder Benzyl ist und X⁻₁₀₁ BF⁻₄ oder ClO⁻₄ ist, und der Verbindung der Formel



(B) die anodischen Verbindungen ausgewählt sind aus Verbindungen der Formel XII

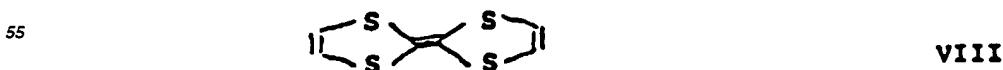


35 worin R₁₂₁ Methyl oder Phenyl ist, und den Verbindungen der Formel XIII



45 wobei R₁₃₂ Sauerstoff, Schwefel oder NR₁₃₃ ist, wobei R₁₃₃ Methyl oder Phenyl ist, und wobei R₁₃₁
(i) Methyl oder Äthyl ist, wenn R₁₃₂ Sauerstoff oder Schwefel ist,
(ii) Methyl ist, wenn R₁₃₂ N(CH₃) ist, oder
(iii) Phenyl ist, wenn R₁₃₂ N(C₆H₅) ist;

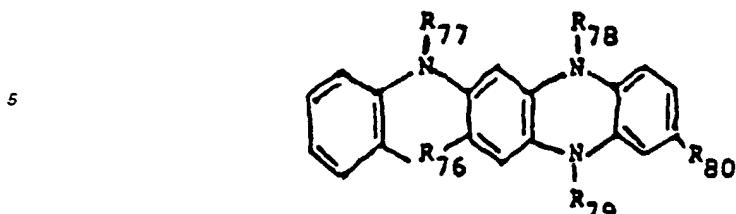
50 und der Verbindung der Formel VIII



und

(C) der inerte, stromführende Elektrolyt eine Verbindung der Formel $M^{+}_{42}(BF^{-}_4)$, wobei M^{+}_{42} Tetra-n-Alkylammonium ist, wobei die n-Alkylgruppen gleich sind und 1 bis 6 Kohlenstoffatome haben.

- 5 6. Lösung nach Anspruch 5,
wobei der inerte stromführende Elektrolyt Tetra-n-Butyl-Ammonium-Fluorborat bei einer Konzentration von 0,05 M bis 0,5 M bei 25°C ist, die kathodischen Verbindungen ausgewählt sind aus 1,1'-Dibenzyl-4,4'-Bipyridinium Difluorborat und Tetramethylen-bis[4(1-Benzylpyridin-4'-yl)-Pyridinium]Tetrafluorborat, die anodischen Verbindungen ausgewählt sind aus 5,10-Dihydro-5,10-Dimethylphenazin und N, N, N', N'-Tetramethyl-1,4-Phenylen-diamin, wobei die gesamte Konzentration der kathodischen Verbindungen 0,01 M bis 0,05 M bei 25°C ist und die gesamte Konzentration der anodischen Verbindungen 0,01 M bis 0,05 M bei 25°C ist.
- 10 7. Selbstlöschende Einkammer-Lösungsphasen-Elektrochrom-Vorrichtung, dadurch **gekennzeichnet**, daß sie als Medium mit reversibel veränderbarer Transmittanz für Licht eine Lösung nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 6 aufweist.
- 15 8. Spiegel mit variabler Reflektanz,
dadurch **gekennzeichnet**, daß er eine selbstlöschende Einkammer-Lösungsphasen-Elektrochromievorrichtung nach Anspruch 7 aufweist.
- 20 9. Spiegel nach Anspruch 8,
bei dem in der Elektrochromievorrichtung die Lösung mit reversibel veränderbarer Transmittanz sich zwischen und in Kontakt mit zwei ebenen, parallelen, im Abstand angeordneten Wänden (100, 130) ist, von denen mindestens eine transparent ist und von denen jede an der die Lösung kontaktierenden Seite mit einer Elektrodenschicht aus elektrisch leitfähigem Material (10A, 13A), beschichtet ist, vorausgesetzt daß, falls eine der Wände nicht transparent ist, sie eine reflektierende Schicht aus Material (18A 20) mit hoher Reflektanz, die durch die Lösung und die transparente Wand Licht reflektiert, das nach Eintritt in die Lösung durch die transparente Wand die reflektierende Schicht erreicht.
- 30 10. Spiegel nach Anspruch 9,
dadurch **gekennzeichnet**, daß
 - (A) beide mit Elektroden versehenen Wände (100, 130) der Elektrochromievorrichtung aus Glas bestehen mit einer Elektrodenschicht (10A, 13A) aus Indium-dotiertem Zinnoxid in Kontakt mit der Lösung von reversibel variabler Transmittanz, wobei der Abstand der Elektrodenschichten 0,006 cm bis 0,25 cm beträgt, und
 - 35 (B) (i) eine der Wände (100) für Licht von sichtbarer Wellenlänge transparent ist und die andere Wand (130) auf der von der elektrodenträgenden Seite abgewandten Seite mit einer reflektierenden Schicht (20) beschichtet ist, oder
 - 40 (ii) beide Wände für Licht von sichtbarer Wellenlänge transparent sind und das reflektierende Mittel des Spiegels die hochreflektive Oberfläche eines prismaförmigen Spiegels (180) ist, der über ein transparentes Laminiermaterial an eine der Wände laminiert ist, wobei der Winkel zwischen der hochreflektiven Oberfläche und der laminierten Oberfläche des prismaförmigen Spiegels 1° bis 5° beträgt; vorausgesetzt daß, falls eine der elektrodenträgenden Wände mit einer reflektierenden Schicht beschichtet ist, die andere elektrodenträgende Wand wahlweise über ein transparentes Laminiermaterial mit einem prismaförmigen Stück Glas (22) laminiert ist, wobei der Winkel zwischen der mit der elektrodenträgenden Wand laminierten Oberfläche und der anderen Oberfläche, durch die im wesentlichen das gesamte, die elektrodenträgende Wand erreichende Licht durchtritt, 1° bis 5° beträgt.
- 50 11. Spiegel nach Anspruch 10,
bei dem das reflektierende Mittel die hochreflektive Oberfläche eines prismaförmigen Spiegels (120, 22) ist, der an eine der elektrodenträgenden Wände (100, 130) der Elektrochromievorrichtung laminiert ist.
- 55 12. Transmittanzmedium einer selbstlöschenden Einkammer-Lösungsphasen-Elektrochromievorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, bei dem die anodische elektrochromische Verbindung eine Verbindung der Formel LII ist



LII

wobei R₇₆ Sauerstoff oder Schwefel ist, R₈₀ Wasserstoff oder Dialkylamino ist, wobei die Alkylgruppen gleich oder verschieden sind und jeweils 1 bis 6 Kohlenstoffatome haben, und R₇₇, R₇₈ und R₇₉ gleich oder verschieden sind und jeweils ausgewählt sind aus Wasserstoff, Alkyl mit 1 bis 6 Kohlenstoffatomen, Phenyl, das wahlweise an beliebiger Position mit einer Alkylgruppe mit 1 bis 6 Kohlenstoffatomen substituiert ist, und Benzyl, das wahlweise an beliebiger Position der Phenylgruppe mit einer Alkylgruppe mit 1 bis 6 Kohlenstoffatomen substituiert ist.

13. Variables Transmittanzmedium nach Anspruch 12, wobei in der anodischen Verbindung LII der Rest R₇₆ Sauerstoff, R₈₀ Wasserstoff und R₇₇, R₇₈ und R₇₉ Methyl sind.

- 20 14. Lösung nach Anspruch 2,

bei der das Lösungsmittel Propylenkarbonat ist; das Kation der kathodischen Verbindung 1,1'-Dimethyl-4,4'-Bipyridinium bei einer Konzentration von 0,01 M bis 0,1 M in der Lösung bei 25°C bei Nullpotential-Gleichgewicht ist; und die anodische Verbindung 5,10 Dihydro-5,10-Dimethylphenazin bei einer Konzentration von 0,01 M bis 0,1 M in der Lösung bei 25°C bei Nullpotential-Gleichgewicht ist.

- 25 15. Lösung nach Anspruch 14,

die mit 3% (Gew.) bis 30% (Gew.) eines Acrylglasmaterials eingedickt ist.

- 30 16. Spiegel nach Anspruch 8,

der ein Rückspiegel für ein Automobil ist und bei dem die Komponente mit reversibel variabler Transmittanz eine kontinuierlich variable Reflektanz ergibt und mittels eines Graukeils kontrollierbar ist.

- 35 17. Spiegel nach Anspruch 16,

bei dem in der Elektrochromievorrichtung die Lösung mit reversibel veränderbarer Transmittanz sich zwischen und in Kontakt mit zwei ebenen, parallelen, im Abstand angeordneten Wänden (100, 130) ist, von denen mindestens eine transparent ist und von denen jede an der die Lösung kontaktierenden Seite mit einer Elektrodenschicht aus elektrisch leitfähigem Material (10A, 13A), beschichtet ist, vorausgesetzt daß, falls eine der Wände nicht transparent ist, sie eine reflektierende Schicht aus Material (18A 20) mit hoher Reflektanz aufweist, die Licht, das nach Eintritt in die Lösung durch die transparente Wand die reflektierende Schicht erreicht, durch die Lösung und die transparente Wand reflektiert.

- 40 18. Spiegel nach Anspruch 17,

bei dem in der Elektrochromievorrichtung die Lösung mit reversibel variabler Transmittanz in einem Raum gehalten ist, der begrenzt ist von den beiden ebenen, parallelen, im Abstand angeordneten Wänden (100, 130) und einer Umgangswand (11), die definiert ist durch eine Epoxydichtung, in die Glasperlen eingebettet sind, die in Kontakt mit den Seiten der Wände sind, die in Kontakt mit der Lösung sind, und die diese Wände auf Abstand halten.

- 45 19. Spiegel nach Anspruch 17 oder 18,

bei dem der Abstand zwischen den Elektrodenschichten zwischen 0,0025 und 0,05 cm beträgt.

20. Spiegel nach einem der Ansprüche 17 bis 19,

bei dem der Flächenwiderstand einer transparenten Elektrodenschicht (10A, 13A) weniger als 40 Ohm pro Quadratfläche beträgt.

- 50 21. Spiegel nach einem der Ansprüche 16 bis 20,

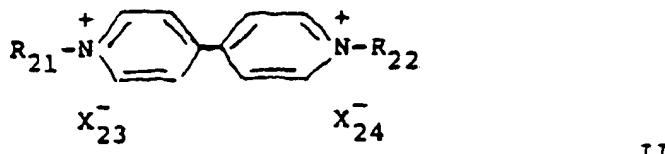
bei dem in der Elektrochromievorrichtung die Lösung mit reversibel variabler Transmittanz enthält

- (A) ein nicht wässriges Lösungsmittel;
 (B) eine kathodische elektrochromische Verbindung;
 (C) 5,10-Dihydro-5,10-Dimethylphenazin; und
 (D) falls alle kathodischen Verbindungen in ihren Nullpotential-Gleichgewichtszuständen nichtionisch sind,
 5 einen inerten, stromführenden Elektrolyten.

22. Spiegel nach einem der Ansprüche 16 bis 22,
 bei dem in der Elektrochromievorrichtung die Lösung mit reversibel variabler Transmittanz ein Viologensalz enthält.
 10 23. Spiegel nach Anspruch 21 oder 22,
 bei dem das Lösungsmittel Propylencarbonat ist.

Revendications

- 15 1. Solution destinée à être utilisée comme milieu de transmission variable d'un dispositif électrochrome à compartiment unique, auto-effaçable, à solution-phase, solution qui comprend un solvant, au moins un composé électrochrome cathodique et au moins un composé électrochrome anodique, et si tous les composés cathodiques et anodiques dans leurs états d'équilibre au potentiel zéro dans la solution sont non ioniques, un électrolyte inerte transportant le courant, caractérisée en ce que le composé électrochrome cathodique, dont au moins un est présent, affiche dans un voltammogramme effectué dans le solvant à la température ambiante, au moins deux ondes de réduction chimiquement réversibles, la première de ces réductions s'accompagnant d'une élévation du coefficient d'extinction molaire à au moins une longueur d'onde dans la gamme visible ; et le composé électrochrome anodique dont au moins un est présent affiche dans un voltammogramme effectué dans le solvant à la température ambiante au moins deux ondes d'oxydation chimiquement réversibles, la première de ces oxydations s'accompagnant d'une élévation du coefficient d'extinction molaire à au moins une longueur d'onde dans la gamme visible.
 20
 25
2. Solution suivant la revendication 1, dans laquelle :
- 30 (A) le solvant est liquide à la température ambiante et choisi entre le carbonate de propylène, la gamma-butyrolactone, la gamma-valérolactone, et tout mélange homogène, liquide à la température ambiante, de deux quelconques ou plus de deux des solvants en question ou de l'un quelconque ou plusieurs des solvants en question avec le carbonate d'éthylène ;
 (B) les composés cathodiques sont choisis entre
- 35 (i) des composés de formule II

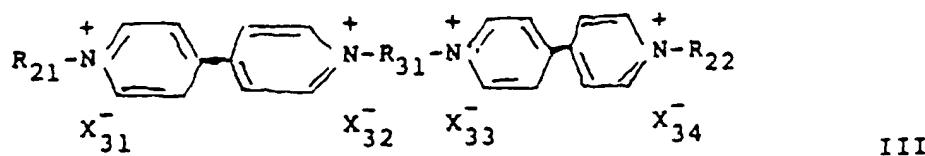


dans laquelle R₂₁ et R₂₂ sont identiques ou différents et sont tous deux choisis entre des groupes alkyle ayant 1 à 10 atomes de carbone, un groupe phényle facultativement substitué dans n'importe quelle position avec un groupe chlorure, bromure, iodure, cyano ou un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 4 atomes de carbone, et un groupe benzyle dont le groupe phényle est facultativement substitué dans n'importe quelle position avec un groupe chlorure, bromure, iodure, cyano ou un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 4 atomes de carbone ; et dans laquelle X₂₃⁻ et X₂₄⁻ sont identiques ou différents et sont tous deux choisis dans entre chlorure, bromure, iodure, BF₄⁻, PF₆⁻, AsF₆⁻, ClO₄⁻ et NO₃⁻ ; et

50 (ii) des composés de formule III

55

5



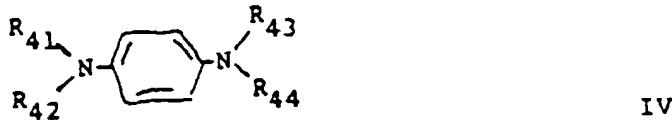
10 dans laquelle R₂₁ et R₂₂ sont identiques ou différents et sont définis comme ci-dessus à propos du composé de formule II, R₃₁ est un groupe alkylène ayant 1 à 10 atomes de carbone, et X⁻₃₁, X⁻₃₂, X⁻₃₃ et X⁻₃₄ sont identiques ou différents et sont choisis chacun entre chlorure, bromure, iodure, BF⁻₄, PF⁻₆, AsF⁻₆, ClO⁻₄ et NO⁻₃;

15 (C) les composés anodiques sont choisis entre

15

(i) des composés de formule IV

20



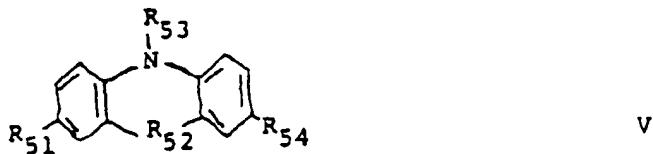
25

dans laquelle R₄₁, R₄₂, R₄₃ et R₄₄ sont identiques ou différents et sont choisis chacun entre de l'hydrogène, u: groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 10 atomes de carbone, un group phényle facultativement substitué dans n'importe quelle position avec un groupe chlorure, bromure, iodure, cyano ou un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 4 atomes de carbone, et u groupe benzyle dont la partie phényle est facultativement substituée dans n'importe quelle position avec un group chlorure, bromure, iodure, cyano ou un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 4 atomes de carbone ;

30

(ii) des composés de formule V

35



40

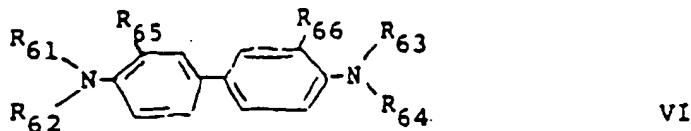
dans laquelle R₅₁ et R₅₄ sont identiques ou différents et sont tous deux choisis entre de l'hydrogène et un groupe dialkylamino dont les groupes alkyle sont identiques ou différents et ont chacun 1 à 6 atomes de carbone ; R₅₂ est de l'oxygène, du soufre, ou un groupe NR₅₅, dans lequel R₅₅ est identique à R₅₃ ou en est différent et R₅₅ et R₅₃ sont tous deux choisis entre de l'hydrogène, un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 10 atomes de carbone, un groupe phényle facultativement substitué dans n'importe quelle position avec un groupe chlorure, bromure, iodure, cyano ou un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 4 atomes de carbone, ou benzyle dont la partie phényle est facultativement substituée dans n'importe quelle position avec un groupe chlourure, bromure, iodure, cyano ou un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 4 atomes de carbone ;

45

(iii) des composés de formule VI

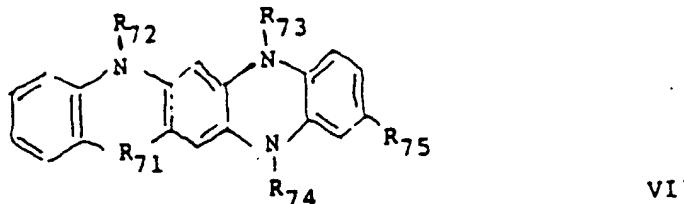
50

55



EP 0 240 226 B1

dans laquelle R₆₁, R₆₁, R₆₃ et R₆₄ sont identiques ou différents et sont choisis chacun entre un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 10 atomes de carbone ou le groupe phényle ; et R₆₅ et R₆₆ sont identiques ou différents et sont tous les deux choisis entre de l'hydrogène et un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 10 atomes de carbone, sous réserve que R₆₅ et R₆₆ soient tous deux de l'hydrogène ou tous deux des groupes alkyle, et que si R₆₅ et R₆₆ sont tous deux de l'hydrogène, pas plus d'un des groupes R₆₁ et R₆₂ ne représente de l'hydrogène et pas plus d'un des groupes R₆₃ et R₆₄ ne représente de l'hydrogène ;
 5 (iv) des composés de formule VII



20 dans laquelle R₇₁ est de l'oxygène ou du soufre, R₇₅ est de l'hydrogène ou un groupe dialkylamino dont les groupes alkyle sont identiques ou différents et sont tous deux choisis entre des groupes alkyle ayant 1 à 6 atomes de carbone, et R₇₂, R₇₃ et R₇₄ sont identiques ou différents et sont choisis chacun entre de l'hydrogène, un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 6 atomes de carbone, un groupe phényle facultativement substitué dans l'une quelconque des positions avec un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 6 atomes de carbone, et benzyle, facultativement substitué dans l'une quelconque des positions du groupe phényle avec un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 6 atomes de carbone ; et
 25 (v) le composé de formule VIII



VIII.

- 35 3. Solution suivant la revendication 2, dans laquelle :

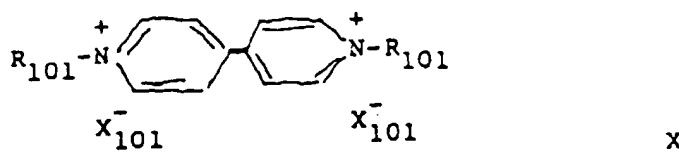
(A) le solvant est le carbonate de propylène ;
 40 (B) la solution contient un électrolyte inerte, transportant le courant, à une concentration de 0,01 M à 1,0 M dans la solution à 25°C, choisi entre un sel de métal alcalin de formule M⁺₃₁X⁻₃₅, un sel de tétraalkylammonium de formule M⁺₃₂X⁻₃₅, le chlorure d'aluminium, le bromure d'aluminium et toute association des sels ci-dessus, où M⁺₃₁ est le potassium, le sodium ou le lithium, M⁺₃₂ est un ion tétraalkylammonium dont lequel les groupes alkyle sont identiques ou différents et sont choisis chacun entre des groupes alkyle ayant 1 à 10 atomes de carbone, et X⁻₃₅ est un ion chlorure, bromure, BF₄⁻, PF₆⁻, ASF₆⁻, ClO₄⁻ et NO₃⁻ ;
 45 (C) la solution contient un ou deux cations différents de composés cathodiques, chacun à une concentration de 0,01 M à 0,1 M dans la solution à 25°C, à l'équilibre au potentiel zéro, et
 (D) la solution contient un ou deux composés anodiques différents, chacun à une concentration de 0,01 M à 0,1 M dans la solution à 25°C, à l'équilibre au potentiel zéro.

- 50 4. Solution suivant la revendication 3, qui est épaisse avec 5% (en poids/poids) à 25% (en poids/poids) d'une matière acrylique en feuille.

5. Solution suivant la revendication 2, dans laquelle :

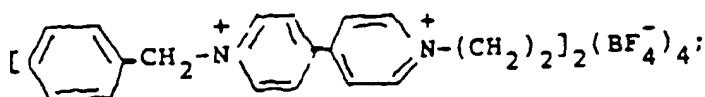
- 55 (A) les composés cathodiques sont choisis entre des composés de formule X

5



10 dans laquelle R_{101} est un groupe n-heptyle, phényle ou benzyle et X_{101}^- est un ion BF_4^- ou ClO_4^- ; et le composé de formule

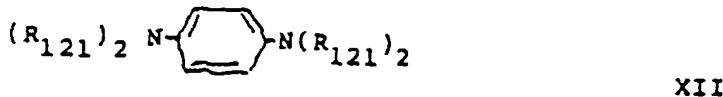
15



20

(B) les composés anodiques sont choisis entre les composés de formule XII

25



30

dans laquelle R_{121} est un groupe méthyle ou phényle, et les composés de formule XIII

35



40

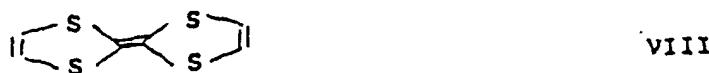
dans laquelle R_{132} est l'oxygène, le soufre ou un groupe NR_{133} , dans lequel R_{133} est un groupe méthyle ou phényle, et R_{131} est

45

- (i) un groupe méthyle ou éthyle, si R_{132} est de l'oxygène ou du soufre,
- (ii) un groupe méthyle, si R_{132} est un groupe $\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)$, ou
- (iii) un groupe phényle, si R_{132} est un groupe $\text{N}(\text{C}_6\text{H}_5)$;

et le composé de formule VIII

50



55

et

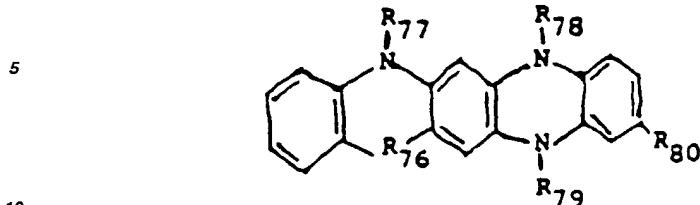
(C) l'électrolyte inert transportant le courant est un composé de formule $\text{M}^+_{42}(\text{BF}_4^-)$, dans laquelle M^+_{42} est un groupe tétra-n-alkylammonium, où les groupes n-alkyle sont identiques et ont 1 à 6 atomes de carbone.

EP 0 240 226 B1

6. Solution suivant la revendication 5, dans laquelle l'électrolyte inerte transportant le courant est le fluoroborate de tétra-n-butylammonium à une concentration de 0,05 M à 0,5 M à 25°C, les composés cathodiques sont choisis entre le difluoroborate de 1,1'-dibenzyl-4,4'-bipyridinium et le tétrafluoroborate de tétraméthylène bis[4(1-benzyl-pyridine-4'-yl)-pyridinium], les composés anodiques sont choisis entre la 5,10-dihydro-5,10-diméthylphénazine et la N,N,N',N'-tétraméthyl-1,4-phénylènediamine, la concentration totale des composés cationiques va de 0,01 M à 0,05 M à 25°C et la concentration totale des concentrés anodiques va de 0,01 M à 0,05 M à 25°C.
- 5
7. Dispositif électrochrome auto-effaçable à compartiment unique à solution-phase, caractérisé en ce qu'il comprend, comme milieu de transmission réversiblement variable vis-à-vis de la lumière, une solution suivant l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 6.
- 10
8. Miroir à réflectance variable, caractérisé en ce qu'il comprend un dispositif électrochrome auto-effaçable à compartiment unique à solution-phase suivant la revendication 7.
- 15
9. Miroir suivant la revendication 8, dans lequel la solution de transmittance réversiblement variable contenue dans le dispositif électrochrome se trouve entre deux parois (100, 130) planes, parallèles, espacées l'une de l'autre et au contact de ces parois, dont l'une au moins est transparente et dont chacune, du côté se trouvant au contact de la solution en question, est revêtue d'une couche (10A, 13A) formant électrode en une matière conduisant l'électricité, sous réserve que, si l'une des parois en question n'est pas transparente, elle porte une couche réfléchissante (18A, 20) en une matière de haute réflectance qui réfléchit, à travers la solution et la paroi transparente, la lumière qui atteint cette couche réfléchissante après son arrivée dans la solution à travers la paroi transparente.
- 20
10. Miroir suivant la revendication 9, caractérisé en ce que
- 25
- (A) les deux parois (100, 130) portant des électrodes du dispositif électrochrome sont en verre portant une couche-électrode (10A, 13A) en oxyde d'étain dopé à l'indium au contact de la solution de transmittance réversiblement variable, la distance séparant les couches-électrodes étant de 0,006 cm à 0,025 cm ; et
- 30
- (B) (i) l'une (100) des parois en question est transparente à la lumière de longueurs d'ondes visibles et l'autre (130) de ces parois est revêtue, du côté opposé au côté portant l'électrode, d'une couche réfléchissante (20) ; ou bien
- (ii) les deux parois en question sont transparentes à la lumière de longueurs d'ondes visibles et le moyen réfléchissant du miroir est la surface hautement réfléchissante d'un miroir prismatique (180) stratifiée au moyen d'une matière transparente stratifiante à l'une des parois, l'angle entre la surface hautement réfléchissante et la surface stratifiée du miroir prismatique étant de 1° à 5° ;
- 35
- sous réserve que, si l'une des parois portant des électrodes est revêtue d'une couche réfléchissante, l'autre paroi portant une électrode soit stratifiée au moyen de la matière stratifiante transparente à un élément prismatique de verre (22), l'angle formé entre la surface stratifiée à la paroi portant une électrode et l'autre surface à travers laquelle passe la quasi totalité de la lumière atteignant la paroi portant l'électrode, ayant une valeur de 1° à 5°.
- 40
11. Miroir suivant la revendication 10, dans lequel le moyen réfléchissant est la surface hautement réfléchissante d'un miroir prismatique (180, 22) stratifiée à l'une des parois (100, 130) portant des électrodes du dispositif électrochrome.
- 45
12. Milieu de transmission d'un dispositif électrochrome auto-effaçable à compartiment unique à solution-phase suivant la revendication 1, dans lequel le composé électrochrome anodique est un composé de formule LII

50

55



LII

15 dans laquelle R₇₆ est de l'oxygène ou du soufre, R₈₀ est de l'hydrogène ou un groupe dialkylamino, dont les groupes alkyle sont identiques ou différents et ont chacun 1 à 6 atomes de carbone, et R₇₇, R₇₈ et R₇₉ sont identiques ou différents et sont choisis chacun entre l'hydrogène, un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 6 atomes de carbone, un groupe phényle facultativement substitué dans l'une quelconque des positions avec un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 6 atomes de carbone, et benzyle facultativement substitué dans l'une quelconque des positions du groupe phényle avec un groupe alkyle ayant 1 à 6 atomes de carbone.

- 20
13. Milieu à facteur de transmission variable suivant la revendication 12, dans lequel le composé anodique LII contient de l'oxygène comme groupe R₇₆, de l'hydrogène comme groupe R₈₀, et R₇₇, R₇₈ et R₇₉ sont des groupes méthyle.
 14. Solution suivant la revendication 2, dans laquelle le solvant est le carbonate de propylène, le cation du composé cathodique est le cation 1,1'-diméthyl-4,4'-bipyridinium à une concentration de 0,01 M à 0,1 M dans la solution à 25°C à l'équilibre au potentiel zéro ; et le composé anodique est la 5,10-dihydro-5,10-diméthylphénazine à une concentration de 0,01 M à 0,1 M dans la solution à 25°C à l'équilibre au potentiel zéro.
 15. Solution suivant la revendication 14, qui est épaissie avec 3% (en poids/poids) à 30% (en poids/poids) d'une matière acrylique en feuille.
 16. Miroir suivant la revendication 8, qui est un miroir de rétroviseur pour véhicule automobile et dont la composante de transmission réversiblement variable offre une réflectance variable de façon continue et est réglable dans l'échelle des gris.
 17. Miroir selon la revendication 16, dans lequel la solution de facteur de transmission réversiblement variable contenue dans le dispositif électrochrome se trouve entre deux parois (100, 130) planes parallèles espacées l'une de l'autre et au contact de ces parois, dont l'une au moins est transparente et dont chacune, du côté se trouvant au contact de la solution en question, est revêtue d'une couche (10A, 13A) formant électrode en une matière conduisant l'électricité, sous réserve que, si l'une des parois en question n'est pas transparente, elle porte une couche réfléchissante ((18A, 20) en une matière de haute réflectance qui réfléchit, à travers la solution et la paroi transparente, la lumière qui atteint cette couche réfléchissante après son arrivée dans la solution à travers la paroi transparente.
 18. Miroir suivant la revendication 17, dans lequel la solution de facteur de transmission réversiblement variable présente dans le dispositif électrochrome est maintenue dans un espace délimité par deux parois planes, parallèles (100,130), espacées l'une de l'autre, et un périmètre (11) défini par un joint d'époxy dans lequel sont noyées des perles de verre qui se trouvent au contact des côtés des parois en question, qui sont au contact de la solution, et qui maintiennent les parois espacées.
 19. Miroir suivant la revendication 17 ou 18, dans lequel la séparation entre les couches-électrodes est comprise entre 0,0025 et 0,05 cm.
 20. Miroir suivant l'une quelconque des revendications 17 à 19, dans lequel la résistance pelliculaire d'une couche-électrode transparente (10A, 13A) est inférieure à 40 ohms par carré.
 21. Miroir suivant l'une quelconque des revendications 16 à 20, dans lequel la solution de facteur de transmission réversiblement variable se trouvant dans le dispositif électrochrome comprend :

EP 0 240 226 B1

- (A) un solvant non aqueux ;
(B) un composé électrochrome cathodique ;
(C) de la 5,10-dihydro-5,10-diméthylphénazine ; et
5 (D) si tous les composés cathodiques dans leurs états d'équilibre au potentiel zéro sont non ioniques, un électrolyte inerte transportant le courant.

22. Miroir suivant l'une quelconque des revendications 16 à 21, dans lequel la solution de facteur de transmission réversiblement variable présente dans le dispositif électrochrome comprend un sel viologène.

10 **23.** Miroir suivant la revendication 21 ou 22, dans lequel le solvant est le carbonate de propylène.

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

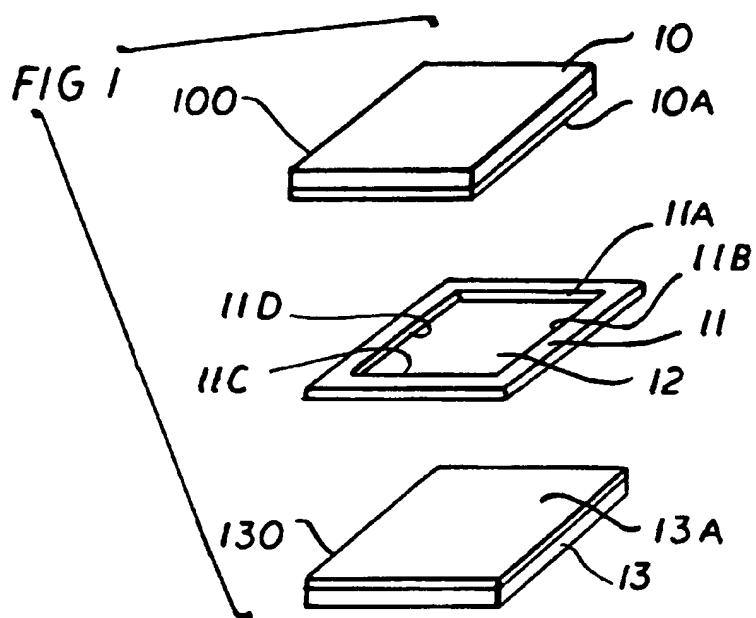


FIG 2

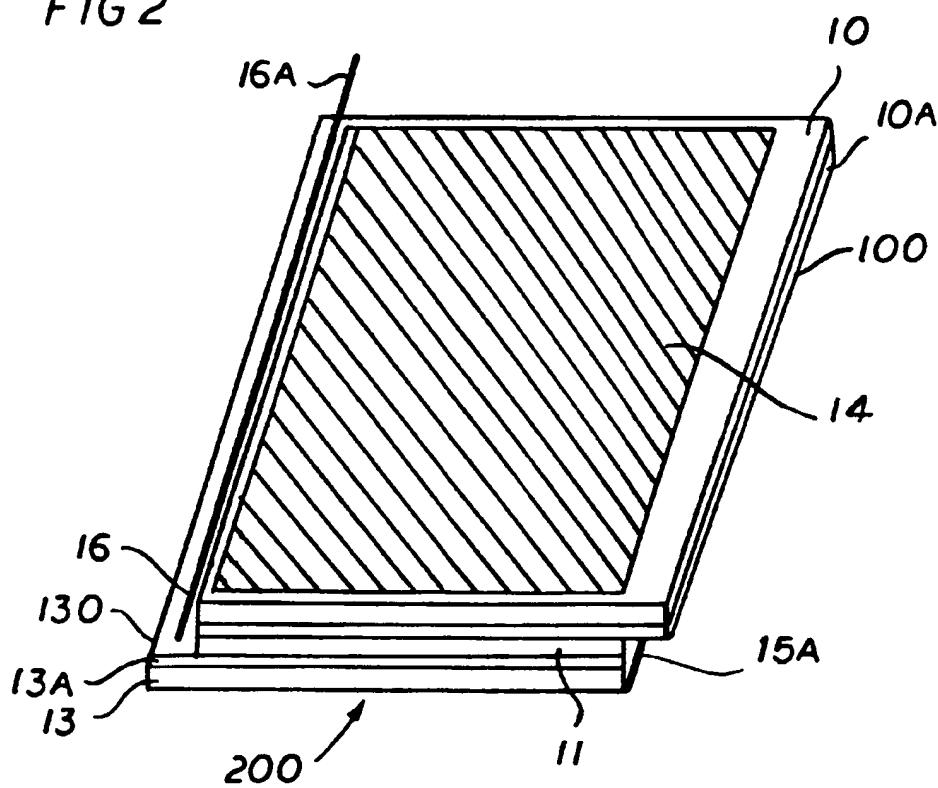


FIG.3

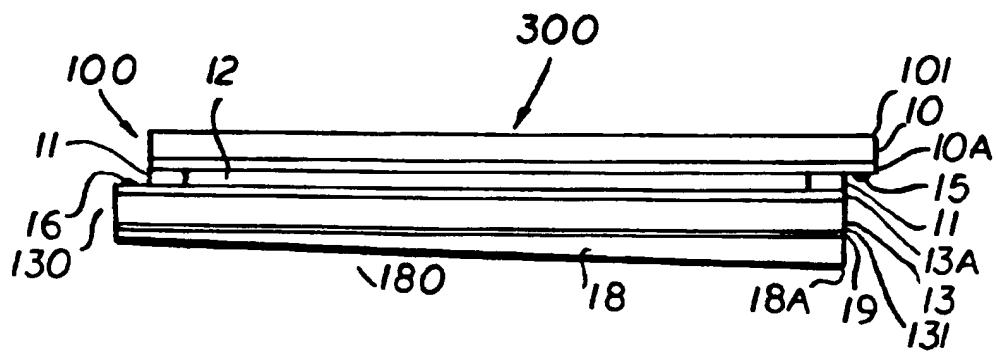


FIG.4

